ROBERT BROWNING IN COLLEGE ANTHOLOGIES

APPROVED:

Fanny Ransom

David Lee Clark

Oscar Maurer jr

APPROVED:

G. P. Bryan

ROBERT BROWNING IN COLLEGE ANTHOLOGIES

THESIS

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Elizabeth Nye Sorrell, B. A.

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PREFACE

> The study of literature demands something in ourselves, a capacity for its influence through feeling and imagination as much as through knowledge. I have known some young people who seemed to be born without that capacity.....I have known many more in whom the capacity was as yet undiscovered and unsuspected by themselves, who, with a fair chance, have awakened to contemplate the glories of literature like 'Cortez' on a peak in Darien. One should not easily despair. A year or two more of living--for there is no commentary on literature so illuminating as experience--an honest and patient effort, surrender to the directions and devices of an intelligent teacher, and who knows? The dawn may come slowly. Or as often happens, in the twinkling of an eye, one is suddenly aware of a new, inexhaustible, everlasting reality--literature! The rest is easy.[1]

The preparation of this thesis has been an adventure. Always there was the opening up of new vistas. It is similar to the trip I made into the Canadian Rockies once. Here a young fawn loped across the road, there a silver stream fell a thousand feet, in the distance a snow-covered mountain top glistened between the pines. So all along in the study of the anthologies there were opened up new worlds, new ideas, new revelations. I dis-

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[1] Osgood, p. 7.

covered Queen Victoria's letter to Gladstone condemning the practice of educating women for the professions, Hibbard's book interlacing art and music with literature, Browning's tribute, "One Word More," expressing his love for Elizabeth Barrett. I discovered these and many more.

All the pleasure of this adventure could not have been had I not had the direction of Dr. Harry Ransom. He has earned my sincere gratitude.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Three General Groups

In youth, as in early childhood, the story with a rhyme enthralled our eye and ear. From Robert Louis Stevenson's "Child's Garden of Verses," we progressed to Tennyson's "Idylls of the King," which, because of its remoteness from the world of here and now, blended into the thoughts of a time when we steeped ourselves in dreams. As we grew older, we began to appreciate prose and to demand more thought in poetry. For that reason, I believe, Browning has grown in stature with the years. His is a poetry and a philosophy for the mature student.

If a student is to spend a great many hours in the study of a poet, it is not absolutely necessary, but it is far more enjoyable if the study concerns one whom he admires. For me, Robert Browning is such a poet because of his courage, his energy, his balance. He is not an optimist, yet he is not a pessimist; not a blind believer, nor an agnostic. His poetry runs the gamut from unaffected lyrics, such as "Summum Bonum" to obscure enigmas such as "Sordello."

This enthusiasm for Browning and an interest in his

work as a result of seventeen years of teaching have prompted this study. It concerns the form and the method of introducing Browning to college students. Of this problem, Osgood has said:

> We hear and read a good deal about the "message" of Browning, or of Shelley's Skylark--"message" being our rather mushy substitute for "moral," a word now grown too grim and grubby for common use. Now, a man's living conclusions and convictions and ideas, which he has generated out of his experience, are no doubt the most important thing about him. But beware the deadly practice of those who isolate these "messages" from his poetry, dry them out, mount them in neat phrases, and lay them away as dead and sterile specimens on the shelf of our minds for future exhibition in examinations or conversation. Those ideas are beautiful, fertile, actual, only when they are embodied in the vibrant music and beautiful design in which their author set them echoing through the world, or in the picture or story in which he exemplified them. They must at all costs be kept alive with the life of the poet himself out of whom they came into being; and by establishing contact between them and the reader at some point where these draw nearest to each other. Only thus can the ideas in literature fertilize and turn into generating forces in the mind and soul of the reader himself.[2]

What is there of Browning in the leading anthologies for the teaching of college-level students? How much of Browning's life is given the student? How much of his

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[2] Osgood, p. 5.

poetry is presented? What helps are given the student in the way of annotation? What is the attitude of the anthologist? How wide is his scope? What is his purpose? Does the anthologist consider that a man may be separated from his work? Into what pigeonholes is Browning placed? These are the questions considered in this thesis.

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CHAPTER II

THE ANTHOLOGIES

For the basis of this study thirteen anthologies were gathered. They are divided into the following three groups:

The first group concerns world literature. These books attempt to cover the major writers in every language. Translations have been made into English from Greek, Latin, German, French, Italian, Scandinavian, and Oriental selections. Selections as early as the Vedic Hymns of India (14th Century B.C.) and as late as the tumultous twentieth century are presented. Browning is shown, therefore, against a universal background. In this group of books are:

Our Heritage of World Literature, edited by Stith Thompson, New York, I938, to be referred to as Thompson.

Western World Writers, edited by Harry Wolcott Robbins and William Harold Coleman, New York, I938, to be referred to as Robbins.

Writers of the Western World, edited by Addison Hibbard, Cambridge, I942, to be referred to as Hibbard.

World Literature, edited by E. A. Cross, New York,

I935, to be referred to as Cross.

The second group concerns literature in the English language. They are inclusive of all that has come since "Beowulf" through the first four decades of the twentieth century. Browning is thereby presented in the tradition of the English language. The first of this group reprints material from such American writers as Hawthorne, Whitman, Emerson, Poe, Dickinson, Mark Twain, and Hemingway. In this group of books are:

Literature in English, edited by H. K. Russell, William Wells, and Donald A. Stauffer, New York, I948, to be referred to as Russell.

Century Readings in English Literature, edited by John W. Cunliffe, Karl Young, and Mark Van Doren, New York, I940, to be referred to as Cunliffe.

Eleven British Writers, edited by Charles G. Osgood and Marvin T. Herrick, Cambridge, I940, to be referred to as Osgood.

The third and by far the largest group of anthologies to be studied concerns English literature. Each is the second volume of a two-volume collection of literary histories and selections. Browning, of course, is included in Volume II in each case. Browning is presented as part of a national literary development, but his place in that national development is by no means agreed upon. In contrast to the four selections from his work used by Cross,

the two-volume group may reproduce as many as Whiting's thirty-seven. The six anthologies in this group are:

British Poetry and Prose, II, edited by Paul R. Lieder, Robert M. Lovett, and Robert K. Root, Cambridge, I938, to be referred to as Lieder.

English Literature and its Backgrounds, II., edited by Bernard Grebanier and Stith Thompson, New York, I940, to be referred to as Grebanier.

The English Heritage, II., edited by Edward H. Weatherly, Harold Y. Moffett, Charles T. Prouty, and Henry H. Noyes, Boston, I945, to be referred to as Weatherly.

From Beowulf to Thomas Hardy, II., edited by Robert Shafer, New York, I940, to be referred to as Shafer.

The College Survey of English Literature, II., edited by B. J. Whiting, Fred B. Millett, Alexander M. Witherspoon, Odell Shepard, Arthur Palmer Hudson, Edward Wagenknecht, and Louis Untermeyer, New York, I946, to be referred to as Whiting.

The Literature of England, II., edited by George B. Woods, Homer A. Watt, George K. Anderson, New York, I948, to be referred to as Woods.

MASTER TABLE

GROUP I

Anthology	Author	Number of poems	Number of words (vita)	Arrangement and Classification of Browning	Annotations
Western World Literatures	Robbins and Coleman	I3	c. I000	Chron. (Realistic Movement)	5 headnotes 56 footnotes inadequate
Our Heritage of World Literature	Thompson	8	33	Chron. (Victorian)	I footnote inadequate
Writers of the Western World	Hibbard	I6	c. 1000	Mood (Romantic)	5 headnotes 55 footnotes fair
World Literature	Cross	4	c. 2000	Chron. (Br. and Continental) Poets I850-I925	none

GROUP II

Anthology	Author	Number of poems	Number of words (vita)	Arrangement and Classification of Browning	Annotations
Literature in English	Russell Wells Stauffer	IO	83	Chron. (No category)	9 footnotes 1 headnote inadequate
Century Readings in English Literature	Cunliffe Young Van Doren	25	762	Chron. (Victorian)	13 headnotes 75 footnotes fair
Eleven British Writers	Osgood & Herrick	58	c. 5000	Chron. (no category)	28 headnotes 206 footnotes good

GROUP III

British Poetry and Prose, II	Lieder Lovett Root	36	c. 1000	Chron. (later nineteenth century)	20 headnotes 128 footnotes good

GROUP III (continued)

Anthology	Author	Number of poems	Number of words (vita)	Arrangement and Classification of Browning	Annotations
English Literature and its Backgrounds, II.	Grebanier & Thompson	20	c. 2500	Chron. (The Victorians)	9 headnotes 60 footnotes fair
The English Heritage, II.	Weatherly Moffett Prouty Noyes	27	c. 1000	Chron. (The Victorians)	no headnotes 135 footnotes fair
From Beowulf to Thomas Hardy, II.	Shafer	32	c. 1500	Chron. (The Victorians)	no headnotes 136 footnotes fair

GROUP III (continued)

Anthology	Author	Number of poems	Number of words (vita)	Arrangement and Classification of Browning	Annotations
The College Survey of English Literature, II.	Whiting Millett Witherspoon Shepard Hudson Wagenknecht	36	c. 1000	Chron. (Victorian)	22 headnotes 271 footnotes good
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The Literature of England, II.	Woods Watt Anderson	36	c. 2000	Chron. (Democracy Science Industrialism) (Poets of Faith and Doubt)	25 headnotes 259 footnotes good
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The Approach of the Anthology

There are different opinions of how anthologies should be compiled. Some editors gather books around them and with scissors snip off selections, with an ever-present eye to space. A work of this type, regardless of effort to correlate it, will naturally appear disjointed. Other anthologists choose selections with an eye to vindicate their own estimates or classifications of the different authors: for example, if the anthologist has classified Browning as a romanticist, the preponderance of the Browning selections will be romantic. If he has classified him as a realist, realistic selections will be chosen. One anthologist who has a definite ax to grind and who seems more interested in his pet social condemnations and reforms is particularly difficult to understand. Robert Shafer goes to great lengths to condemn the social institutions of the Victorian Period so that his influence over the selections makes it difficult to study the literature for its own sake and not as an evidence of social or political conditions. This method has a place in a course in sociology but not in a course in literature.

The author understands the problems entailed in the preparation of an anthology; so much material, so many ideas, so many poets to be crowded into such a short

space. This general estimate of the anthologies is intended less as a final criticism than an introduction to the means by which Browning's poetry is shown to college students.

Robbins:

The editors of Western World Literature have proved the materials in their anthology by use in the classroom at Bucknell University for six years. The material covers nearly three thousand years, but the emphasis is on modern literature. Even translations of the classics have been revised in order to make them understandable. With an "eye-on-the-student" attitude, the editors have produced a well-balanced sampling of the great literature of the world.

Thompson:

Thompson emphasizes the inclusion of all writers, either foreign or English, whose work has been our cultural inheritance, and the exclusion of all writers who are exotic and not part of our intellectual and artistic life. His is a classical book with much space given to Greek philosophy and to the myths as recounted by Bulfinch. With its eye on the stream of culture, this anthology does not connect the work with the author.

Cross:

Cross, who claims that "Many contemporary education-

al philosophers are convinced that the aim of the schools should be toward breadth rather than depth,"[1] certainly follows this shallow philosophy, for of Browning's work, he gives only four poems, two of which Browning did with his left hand. In addition the editorial material in Cross is written in terms aimed at high school sophomores. In comparison with the other anthologies it is as tasteless as unleavened bread eaten after fruit cake.

Hibbard:

The anthology of world literature by Hibbard is the best of this group because, in place of dividing his literary selections into periods, he classifies them as to mood or temper, the inner forces of humanity. The usual classification into chronological periods he finds artificial.

> Conventionally, English literature has been explained chronologically, The Age of Chaucer, the Renaissance, the Period of Anne, convenient blocks hewn from the marble mountain and shaped into chaste but not always convincing images.[2]

In his classification of literature by literary temper, he arrives at three major categories; the classical, romantic, and realistic. The romantic has one

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1 Cross, p. iii.

2 Hibbard, p. vi.

special phase, symbolism. The realistic has three special phases - impressionism, naturalism, and expressionism. The tempers of art reflect the tempers of men at various times, moments of joyous exuberance, moments of calmness and serenity, moments of facing facts.

Mr. Hibbard relates the masterpieces of sculpture, architecture, painting, and music to the literary types, recognizing all of them as mediums of man's expression.

Russell:

The arrangement of this book is not always clear. For example, the preface declares:

> The unity of literature appears, not through an editorial arrangement by arbitrarily named periods, by types, or by geographical boundaries, but in patterns of thought and language changing and interrelated through more than five centuries.[3]

This statement would lead the reader to think, "Ah, here is another book in which the selections are termed realistic, romantic, or classic." The editor continues, "For this reason we have used the chronological order."[4] To the reader the reason for using the chronological order has not been made clear at all.

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[3] Russell, p. iii.

[4] Ibid., p. iii.

This anthology mentions one problem of which no other anthologist takes account--the mere mechanics of the original selections.

> Each part of an author's work is printed under the title of the book in which it was published, and we have ordinarily taken that text which appears to represent most nearly the author's intention at the time of publication.---As a general policy we have preferred not to force an author to conform to usage dictated by modern handbooks of composition, but to retain as far as possible the capitalization, italics, punctuation, and spelling closely associated with the author's style in his age.[5]

Cunliffe:

The most commendable contribution of the Century Readings is its excellent background material, which has been amplified in the new fifth edition. The most important change is that the major writers have been more liberally represented in the new edition.

Osgood:

Eleven British Writers really contains only ten, but it adds one hundred and thirty-five lyrics in the back of the book. The ten writers discussed at length are: Chaucer, Spenser, Milton, Swift, Pope, Wordsworth, Carlyle, Tennyson, Browning, Arnold. Of these ten literary figures, the editor says in the preface,"These

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[5] Russell, p. iii.

eleven authors stand as solid piers between which are suspended the spans of historical tradition across the centuries."[6] The reader wonders who was eleventh. Where is Shakespeare? Where, the great Romantic poets? Shakespeare was omitted because "The student will encounter him elsewhere before the end of his sophomore year."[7]

This anthology includes an essay entitled "Words and Music" which provides a useful introduction to any literature course, because it answers the question so often asked by students, "Why do we have to study literature?"

Lieder:

In the preface to British Poetry and Prose, the editor has recognized that literature is a fine art, that it has had a historical development in its form and in its material, and that it is an expression of the creative artist. Such time-worn explanations as these make prefaces dull reading which the student usually skips over hurriedly.

Grebanier:

The authors feel that they are producing a new kind

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6 Osgood, p. iii.

7 Ibid., p. iii.

of anthology. In it they present not only English literature but specimens of foreign works by which the English have been influenced. For example, Jean Jacques Rousseau's "A Discourse on Inequality" precedes the selections from Robert Burns. The editor admits that Burns may never have read Rousseau's democratic ideas. An excerpt from Giorgio Vasari's Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects, preceeds Robert Browning's "Fra Lippo Lippi," Robert Browning having been helped in a number of his poems on great artists by Vasari's fascinating book.

Weatherly:

The editors of The English Heritage felt that too much is generally included in most anthologies prepared for a survey course in English literature; so they eliminated many minor authors and much modern literature from their book. As a consequence of this whittling down of content, the book is much smaller in bulk than any other anthology studied.

Whiting:

The College Survey of English Literature is unusual because it has seven editors. Each period is done by a separate editor who is a specialist in his period. The publisher writes in the preface:

> It was for this sense of reality that the publishers carefully sought for and found that scholar-teacher of each period who could best take you there-intimately, with en-

thusiasm, and accuracy.[8]

Woods:

The last of the anthologies studied, The Literature of England, attempts to correlate literature with art, by the use of pen and ink sketches in the wide margins of the sections which give historical background material. Recent history has taken an important section, "The Struggle on the Darkling Plain."

Into such different company, gathered for such varying purposes, Robert Browning is introduced in several ways. With various emphasis, his life and career are mentioned; so are his relationships with his own period and his significance to ours. These matters, together with a broad criticism concerning Browning's leading ideas,will be reviewed in general. Then, after an analysis of the recurrence of particular poems among the anthologies, the specific methods of presentation will be reported.

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8 Whiting, II., p. v.

CHAPTER III

ROBERT BROWNING

In modern pedagogy the tendency among college instructors has been to disregard the biographical facts of a poet's life and to emphasize his work. However, the fact that eleven of the thirteen anthologists attempt to give biographical data on Robert Browning bears evidence to the demand for that kind of information by the teacher and the student. A student with an inquiring mind is not satisfied unless he goes to the source of his study; he feels he must know something about the life of the poet.

The anthologists adopt various attitudes toward the poet and the events of his life. To illustrate this point we shall cite passages found in the different anthologies:

Early life:

> Browning, born in Camberwell, a London suburb, was the son of a clerk in the Bank of England, who gave him a good education and encouraged his youthful inclination towards poetry.[1]

> One of the healthiest and most virile of English poets, Robert Browning was born May 7, 1812, in Camberwell, then a suburb of London, where he lived for his first twenty-eight years. His father was a clerk in the Bank of England and himself somewhat

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1 Cunliffe, p. 851.

gifted in the fine arts and letters. Though the fact that his parents were Non-conformists prevented their son's attendance at either of the great universities, the young Browning did not lack for cultural opportunities. The family library with its rich collection of curious and erudite books afforded him an education supplementary to what he could obtain at near-by schools. The elder Browning, who remained a sympathetic friend throughout his son's career (he lived until the poet's sixty-fifth year), was a devotee of medieval legend, and the boy came to know "Paracelsus, Faustus, and even Talmudic personages, personally." His mother was a skilled musician who developed Robert's taste so well that music was ever dear to him. Not far from the Camberwell home, too, stood the Dulwich Art Gallery, with which the lad became thoroughly familiar. Although he attended London University for a few months (1829-30), it was his home environment which equipped him with a varied and scholarly knowledge of the classics, music, history, art, and philosophy. His athletic physique and his wholesomely sociable nature prevented all this learning from becoming pedantry, but rather converted it into something alive and zestful.[2]

From a teacher's point of view the Grebanier life is superior to the Cunliffe life, for Browning becomes the little boy next door. The reader feels that he almost knows the child. Neither of the anthologists make plain Browning's unique education as does Hibbard:

> The father was indulgent and somewhat experimental in the education he gave young Robert; the boy had little formal schooling, but was urged to read widely and encouraged in special interests as they developed.[3]

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2 Grebanier, II., p. 557.

3 Hibbard, p. 793.

First Poetic Works:

> His admiration for Byron and Shelley resulted in an imitative poem entitled Pauline, privately and anonymously issued in his twenty-first year. Browning's dislike of this poem because of its confessional note led him to abandon the first person singular in his poetry, which was henceforth objective and dramatic.[4]

> Save for a little volume of boyish verse privately printed by his father under the title Incondita, Browning's first publication was Pauline, 1833. The expenses of this publication were paid by a benevolent aunt, and the poem made no stir whatever. The influence that it reveals is that of Shelley--not Keats, who was at the same time undergoing a reincarnation in the early poems of Tennyson.[5]

Notice that the anthologists differ on the point of Browning's influences. Weatherly says Shelley and Byron; Woods says Shelley only. Woods, with a practical turn of mind, gives us the financial background. Another writer who gives much emphasis to this first publication is Osgood, who says of Pauline:

> Not a single copy of the poem was sold. John Stuart Mill, however, wrote a review. 'With considerable poetic powers, the writer seems to me possessed with a more intense and morbid self-consciousness than I ever knew in any sane human being.' Fortunately Browning recognized

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4 Weatherly, II., p. 353.

5 Woods, II., p. 655.

> the truth of Mill's criticism, and resolved never again to expose his inner feelings so naively.[6]

Mature Period:

Almost any Browning student knows that the dramas which Browning wrote were good training for his later dramatic monologues, yet Shafer says:

> Paracelsus also attracted the attention of the actor-manager Macready, and led him to ask the poet for a play. As a result Browning wrote Strafford, which was acted at the Covent Garden Theater in 1837 and published in the same year. He had dramatic genius, as was evident from Paracelsus, and it was natural both for him and for Macready to suppose that he could succeed with plays; yet it is unfortunate that he was led to expend as much time as he did on the effort. Strafford, while it was not a complete failure, had only a very qualified success.[7]

> In 1840 with the publication of Sordello, Browning's slowly rising reputation suffered a severe blow, for the public was completely mystified by the long and obscure piece. Mrs. Carlyle expressed rather accurately the popular reaction when she declared that she could not decide whether Sordello was intended to be a man, a city, or a book. In 1834 the poet had visited Italy and laid the foundation of what was to be an enduring affection for that country and of what was to prove the major influence upon his poetic life. The first outcome of the sojourn was "Pippa Passes," published in 1841 and the first of the series Bells and Pomegranates, ...The series was continued in 1842 with Dramatic Lyrics and in 1845 with Dramatic Romances,

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6 Osgood, p. 1094.

7 Shafer, II., p. 665.

> which contain some of his choicest verse.[8]

These were Browning's poetic productions all written before his marriage to Elizabeth Barrett. Since that event has been the subject of so much discussion, little will be said of it except that one anthologist paints a charitable picture of Mr. Barrett who is so often vilified. From Grebanier comes this comment:

> Early in the same year he began his correspondence with the poet, Elizabeth Barrett, with whom he was already in love by the time he met her five months later. For many years she had not left her room where she was virtually imprisoned by her father's fear for her life. She, on her part, was in love with him, too, but she dreaded to burden his vigorous manhood with a tubercular wife. After a whirlwind courtship, during which she took a new interest in life and seemed to collect new resources of strength within herself, he proposed marriage to her. Her father was adamant in his refusal to give his consent to what he was certain would hasten his daughter's impending death. Browning, confident that his love could rescue her from her couch of illness, insisted on an elopement. Secretly they were married in September 1846 and ran off to Italy.[9]

No other anthologist took such a charitable view of Mr. Barrett. To Woods, he is a "domineering and possesive

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8 Robbins, p. 1238.

9 Grebanier, II., p. 557.

Victorian father."[10]

No other anthologist stated or implied as did Grebanier that Elizabeth Barrett suffered from tuberculosis. The more popular report is that she was an invalid due to a fall off a horse.

Italian Period:

The anthologists have two points of view about Browning's Italian period. The Brownings lived in Italy until Mrs. Browning's death in 1861. According to Robbins and Osgood, some of his best work was done during this time, but one anthologist differs on this point.

> During the Italian period Browning published Christmas Eve and Easter Day (1850) and Men and Women (1855), a series of soul studies which includes much of his best work.[11] In 1855 he published Men and Women, containing such mature masterpieces as "Fra Lippo Lippi," "Andrea del Sarto," and "A Grammarian's Funeral." English literature had acquired a new kind of poetry.[12]
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> During the married years Robert Browning did not write a great deal of poetry.[13]

Cross who made the above statement and added no qualifying phrase seems to make little of Elizabeth Barrett's

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10 Woods, II., p. 656.

11 Robbins, p. 1238.

12 Osgood, p. 1096

13 Cross, p. 953.

influence. Actually the Dramatis Personae published in 1864 and his masterpiece, The Ring and the Book, published in 1868-69, were in the process of being composed.

Later Years:

That Browning's last years were happy ones is brought out by many of the anthologists. Hibbard says:

> Dignified, rich in friendships, without financial stress, free from social or political rebellion, the life of Robert Browning was anything but a career in a garret.[14]

> By this time Browning had received the D.C.L. from Oxford, and Dr. Furnivall had founded the Browning Society. After long neglect, the poet was now a classic in his own lifetime; he carried his wrongs bravely and his honors lightly. The Browning Society became a veritable symbol of late nineteenth-century culture all over the English-speaking world. At the height of his fame, Browning died in Venice, December I2, 1889.[15]

Browning's Relation to His Background

How is Browning related to his background? What did the people of England think of him?

> For a long while they probably never knew he existed, though a few may have heard

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14 Hibbard, p. 793.

15 Whiting, II., p. 536.

> that Elizabeth Barrett had a husband who was also a writer. It was not until the close of his life that Browning enjoyed a widespread popularity, and then his enjoyment must have been considerably checked by the extravagant behavior of his worshipers.[16]

How did Browning feel about the problems of the period? Most of the anthologies classify Browning as a Victorian, but few try to show a relation between him and the nineteenth century England. Four of those which did use very different approaches are illustrated in the passages which follow.

Osgood feels that Browning was hurt by his contact with Victorian England:

> Browning came back to an England that was seething with activity. The industrial age was approaching its climax. The Philistines were assuming full command of industry, commerce, banking, and politics, and building the British Empire. Religion, science, and art were in a ferment. The chief signs that Browning recognized this changing England are a lessening of 'music' and an increase of 'discoursing' in his verse and, more and more, a turning from historical themes to contemporary life.[17]

In trying to relate Browning to his age, Woods finds two points of contact between the stream of Victorianism and the poet--humanitarianism and an interest in social

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16 Osgood, p. 1091.

17 Ibid., p. 1096.

problems. In his effort to make a kinship here, the threads wear a bit thin. Woods says:

> One note that is often struck is that of the humanitarianism of the times.. .....Usually, however, the poetic themes are not narrowed to a single contemporary situation or set of situations but have to do specifically with the experiences and emotions of human beings. Few of the great poets of the period have escaped this concern with men and women. Browning yielded to the motive most readily of all, perhaps, devoting his genius without stint to the analysis of human action.[18]
>
> In poetry the interest in human beings and in contemporary social problems resulted not so much in killing the spirit of romanticism as in changing it..... Browning's counts, ladies, alchemists, monks, and other figures of the Middle Ages, medieval though they are in externals and often in their mental attitudes, interest their creator because of their souls and because of the problems presented by their social relationships.[19]

Wheatherly selects ideas in Browning's work which have more connection with Victorian religious thought and ideas which Browning held in direct opposition to Victorian prudery.

> His faith in God and belief in immortality, as well as his admiration for courage and strenuous human effort, were typically Victorian. But his healthy attitude toward moral, social

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18 Woods, II., p. 413.

19 Ibid., p. 413.

and artistic problems was not typical of his period. In an age when repression of natural desire was dinned into the ears of fearful congregations, Browning portrayed characters like Fra Lippo Lippi living a full and sensual life. In an age when women were supposed to be the willing slaves of their husbands, he wrote poems like "My Last Duchess," in which he exposed the domination of the husband who valued wealth and family pride more than the happiness of his wife. Like Carlyle and Ruskin, Browning was basically a critic of nineteenth-century society, though few of his poems were didactic and his criticism was usually conveyed dramatically through conflict of characters. Like Renaissance painters he admired, he painted life in the full flesh. Concerned with the vigor of physical and mental existence, he was one of the most effective antagonists of Victorian prudery, and consequently his poetry won greater popularity in the twentieth century than Tennyson's.[20]

The best demonstration of Robert Browning's relationship to his age is given by Grebanier:

> Robert Browning with whom it has been customary to contrast Tennyson, might as effectively be contrasted with all his contemporaries. He was a man far more interested in human beings than in general concepts, and his writing is as alien to the optimism of Macaulay, to the lectures of Carlyle and Ruskin, as to the uncertainties of Tennyson or the doubts and humanism of Arnold. Aggressively optimistic Browning undoubtedly was, but his optimism was of a species almost personal;

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20 Wheatherly, II., p. 354.

> unrelated to the glories of the British Empire or the improvement of Liberalism and science. Although in "Why I Am a Liberal" he makes plain his endorsement of social progress, he was, in comparison with his great contemporaries, almost unconcerned with the causes and results of the Victorian social milieu. Nor did the conflict between religion and science greatly disturb him. He was essentially a religious man, but he allied himself to no formal religion...[21]

Browning's Relation to the Twentieth Century

What of Browning's relationship to the literature of the present day? Has he grown or diminished in stature? Is he read as much now as he was in the later years of his life? Among the anthologists there are both admirers and detractors. Robert Shafer is one of the foremost of his detractors:

> The Victorian age gave us much significant and beautiful poetry, it is true, but no poet of the first rank. Tennyson and Browning were the poetical giants of the era, and with the passage of time they have shrunk. ....Victorian life, Victorian people, and Victorian achievements, in short, were all unpoetical, and could give satisfaction only to unpoetical observers..[22] And if Pope's optimism was frivolous and

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21 Grebanier, II., p. 441-42.

22 Shafer, II., p. 461.

> shallow, so was Browning's[23] ..In reality, of course, the famous Browning style was a weakness.[24]

In contrast to this attitude, Osgood and Herrick have chosen Robert Browning as one of the great figures which are presented in Eleven British Writers. In a final discussion of Browning, they give him a high place:

> Browning has received a cordial welcome from the poets of the twentieth century. With the exception of John Donne, who resembles him in many ways, no poet has exerted a greater influence upon our contemporary poets, in both England and America. Look, for example, at the best work of Edwin Arlington Robinson, Edgar Lee Masters, Robert Frost. There is a good deal of Browning's peculiar method in all these poets. The reputation of Browning has suffered the usual ups and downs of a writer who has once attracted great attention. Right now his reputation is high, and it seems likely to remain high for some time to come.[25]

Edward Wagenknecht of the University of Washington in the College Survey lays stress upon Browning's spiritual significance. While he was not an advocate of organized religion, his religious ideas are helpful to those who accept and believe them.

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23 Shafer, II., p. 463.

24 Ibid., p. 463.

25 Osgood, p. 1100.

> Although it took Browning longer to win his place among the Victorian giants than it took Tennyson, he now stands even more secure. To be sure, he would not approve of all his admirers. To value him merely for his cacophonies, his bold and skillful versification, his deliberate sacrifice of melody to drama, his tendency to stress psychology at the expense of sensuous beauty--this he would feel, is to get it all but the point. Browning's real significance, like that of every great writer is a spiritual significance; he made one of the most exciting affirmations in the history of English poetry.....That was how Browning lived and wrote and even those who are not fortunate enough to share his faith in all its aspects must respond in spite of themselves to his tremendous enthusiasm.[26]

Anthologists note those principal aspects of Browning popular in the twentieth century among middle-of-the-road readers who do not want to loose all their links with the past in looking forward to the future, people who want to remain sane in spite of pessimism and the atomic bomb. Foremost of these characteristics is his philosophy of courage, for it was not only in "Prospice" that he proclaimed:

> I was ever a fighter, so one fight more,
> The best and the last.[27]

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[26] Whiting, II., p. 536.

[27] "Prospice," l. 13-14.

The second aspect of Browning that finds an echo in the twentieth century is his attitude toward spirit and matter. He recognizes this dualism as good, rather than bad.

> Can't I take breath and try to add life's flash,
> And then add soul and heighten them three-fold?[28]

> Let us cry, "All good things
> Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more now,
> than flesh helps soul.[29]

The third characteristic of Browning which the twentieth century approves is the use of simple language. It is not Browning's choice of words, but his combination of them which sometimes puzzles the reader. Almost like the sound of modern poetry in their diction are the following phrases taken at random from Browning's poetry: "door-side bench," "creeping through the moss they loved," "blackening in the daily candle-smoke," "the dripping cloak and shawl," "the boy who stoops to pat a dog," "the bough of cherries," "peach-blossom marble," "church-bells begin."

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28 "Fra Lippo Lippi," l. 213-14.

29 "Rabbi Ben Ezra," l. 71-72.

CHAPTER IV

STUDY OF SELECTIONS

Table to Show the Poems Used and Frequency of Use

Title of poem	Number of times it appears
"My Last Duchess"	13
"Prospice"	13
"The Epilogue to Asolando"	11
"Rabbi Ben Ezra"	10
"Fra Lippo Lippi"	10
"Andrea del Sarto"	10
"The Bishop Orders His Tomb at Saint Praxed's Church"	9
"The Lost Leader"	9
"The Grammarian's Funeral"	9
"Home Thoughts from Abroad"	9
"Meeting at Night"	8
"Parting at Morning"	8
"Memorablia"	8
"Love Among the Ruins"	8
"The Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister"	8
"Pippa's Song"	8
"The Last Ride Together"	7
"The Statue and the Bust"	7
"Why I Am a Liberal"	6
"A Woman's Last Word"	6
"Cavalier Tunes"	6
"De Gustibus"	6
"Evelyn Hope"	6
"My Star"	6
"A Toccata of Galuppi's"	5
"Abt Vogler"	5
"Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came"	5
"How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix"	5
"Saul"	5
"Up at a Villa"	4
"Respectability"	4
"Caliban Upon Setebos"	4
"Confessional"	4
"Porphyria's Lover"	3
"Pictor Ignotus"	3
"Home-Thoughts from the Sea"	3
"The Laboratory"	3
"Count Gismond"	2
"Confessions"	2
"Apparent Failure"	2
"The Glove"	2

"Herve Riel"	2
"The House"	2
"Incident of the French Camp"	2
"The Italian in England"	2
"Never the Time and the Place"	2
"One Word More"	2
"The Patriot"	2
"Two in the Campagna"	2
"Youth and Art"	2
"After"	1
"Before"	1
"Cristina"	1
"Adam, Lilith, and Eve"	1
"Development"	1
"The Englishman in Italy"	1
"Earth's Immortalities"	1
"The Guardian Angel"	1
"How it Strikes a Contemporary"	1
"Instans Tyrannus"	1
"Ivan Ivanovitch"	1
"In a Gondola"	1
"James Lee's Wife"	1
"Misconceptions"	1
"May and Death"	1
"Muckle-Mouth Meg"	1
"Magic"	1
"One Way of Love"	1
"Pied Piper of Hamelin"	1
"Popularity"	1
"A Pearl, a Girl"	1
"Pheidippides"	1
"Summum Bonum"	1
"Two Poets of Croisic, Prologue"	1

Browning's masterpiece, "The Ring and the Book," is too long to be included in its entirety in any of the anthologies. It is mentioned in the discussion of his works in nearly all of them. Selected parts are included in four of the books. The anthologists have tried to give enough of "The Ring and the Book" for the student to understand Browning's purpose. "Pompilia" is selected most often, "Caponsacchi" next.

What does such a list of the selections from Robert Browning's work mean? Simply that the anthologists show widely different taste. They all agree, however, on the superiority of the dramatic monologues. Among the sixteen most popular poems we find most of Browning's great characterizations, great in the sense that they present people realistically and memorably.

Study of Selections

In the dramatic monologues we overhear a negotiation between a duke and an emissary who has come to arrange a marriage between the duke and a count's fair daughter; we see an arrest after midnight on the streets of Florence with Fra Lippo; we attend the death-bed of a worldly old bishop; we learn why Brother Lawrence's flower blossoms disappear so strangely; we join the funeral procession of a grammarian who had sought the ideal throughout his life; we watch Andrea del Sarto's wife go off with another man.

In the lyrics we learn of Browning's admiration for Shelley, under whose influence he fell in his early youth. He was not deeply influenced by his great contemporaries. We find him disappointed in Wordsworth and yet regretting that he had ever penned those oft quoted words in "The Lost Leader:"

Just for a handful of silver he left us,
Just for a riband to stick in his coat.[1]

We learn what he thought of love in a number of lyrics - in "Meeting at Night," "Love Among the Ruins," "Two in the Campagna," "The Statue and the Bust," "One Word More," and a multitude of others. Love and the good moment are to Browning, as to other romantics, the essence of life. In "Meeting at Night," he describes the "gray sea," the "yellow half-moon," the trip over the water to the cove, and the "two hearts beating each to each!" After describing the ruins found in the countryside near Rome where the lovers are meeting on a summer evening, he contrasts the importance of love with the power that was Rome's in "Love Among the Ruins."

For whole centuries of folly, noise and sin!
Shut them in,
With their triumphs and their glories and the rest!
Love is best."[2]

In "Two in the Campagna" the subject is one of his favorites, the meeting of lovers, and this poem is written in the first person.

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1 "The Lost Leader," l. 1-2.

2 "Love Among the Ruins," l. 81-84.

.....I kiss your cheek,
Catch your soul's warmth - I pluck the rose
And love it more than tongue can speak
Then the good minute goes.[3]

Love, to Robert Browning is never cold and sterile. In the "Statue and the Bust" the fault in the Lady and Duke Ferdinand, who fell in love with one another at her wedding feast, was not that they fell in love, but that they did nothing about it.

The counter our lovers staked was lost
As surely as if it were lawful coin:
And the sin I impute to each frustrate ghost

Is--the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin,
Though the end in sight was a vice, I say.
You of the virtue (we issue join)
How strive you? De te, fabula![4]

Browning's love for his wife was expressed in a life full of companionship such as few find in this world. It is natural that he addresses his poem "One Word More" to E. B. B. in the dedication of Men and Women, published in 1855.

I shall never, in the years remaining,
Paint you pictures, no, nor carve you statues,
Make you music that should all-express me;
So it seems: I stand on my attainment.
This of verse alone, one life allows me;
Verse and nothing else have I to give you.
Other heights in other lives, God willing:

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3 "Two in the Campagna," l. 47-50.

4 "The Statue and the Bust," l. 44-50.

All the gifts from all the heights, your own,
Love! [5]

Love for humanity, interest in mankind, is reflected in all the dramatic monologues. Love for the individual, constant and powerful, is shown in many of the lyrics. Like Shelley, Browning believed in a God of love. Of his general concept Osgood writes:

> Consequently we may briefly summarize here the chief ethical doctrines that appear again and again in Browning's poetry. We find two: (1) proof for the existence of a benevolent God and of the innate goodness of man is found in love, which in turn proves man's immortality,....In "Abt Vogler" Browning shows how love leads to God, and in "Saul," he rises to an impassioned expression of the heavenly love which fills "infinitude."[6]

In the chief purpose, development of the soul, Browning thinks that one great force is love:

> The other great force in life is love,which to Browning means human love or insight, and human energy or achievement. Both these forces demand immortality for their fulfillment, for love has "never found an earthly close."[7]

Even more than love, Browning emphasized life. The world was the proving ground for the coul, and the soul aimed at perfection. The poet did not believe that per-

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[5] "One Word More," l. 109-116.

[6] Osgood, p. 1097.

[7] Lieder, II., p. 562.

fection was attainable, but that the mere seeking after it was to test the stuff of which men are made.

> His philosophy stresses the value of developing one's personality or soul. In this, the will to effort, supplemented by courage and faith, is one powerful force...The great sins to Browning are 'sluggishness, indifference, and sloth of living.' The very imperfection of experience on earth was to Browning an assurance of a world beyond, a belief that he held with resolute confidence in contrast with Tennyson's groping faith.[8]

World-weariness, escape into the dream world, images steeped in the sensuous impressions, were not for Browning. His attitude toward life was that of buoyant - sometimes uncritical - acceptance, activity, and courage. Of all the poets he was probably the best balanced because he took the whole of life and took it as it was. The best expression of this attitude is found in "Rabbi Ben Ezra:"

> Then, welcome each rebuff
> That turns earth's smoothness rough,
> Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!
> Be our joys three-parts pain!
> Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
> Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe![9]

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[8] Lieder, II., p. 562-63.

[9] "Rabbi Ben Ezra," l. 31-36

The anthologists have emphasized their selections on other men, on love, and on life. And after these, what is there to know?

One of the objectives of this study is to observe the use of annotations by the anthologists. To what extent were annotations used? Of what significance were the annotations? Where were they placed? In general most of the anthologists added explanations of the selections; a few offered the selections as cold turkey, without any sauce. Two editors provided not the least vestige of a note.[10] One gave only a few footnotes but longer references in the back of the book.[11] Some used footnotes only.[12] Others gave both headnotes and footnotes.[13]

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10 World Literature, Our Heritage of World Literature.

11 Literature in English.

12 The English Heritage, From Beowulf to Thomas Hardy, Eleven British Writers, Western World Literature,

13 The Literature of England, British Poetry and Prose, Century Readings in English Literature, Writers of the Western World, English Literature and its Backgrounds, The College Survey of English Literature.

From the point of view of a teacher, anthologies which offer no annotations or very limited annotations in the back of the book are inadequate. In expressing an emotion, developing an idea, or telling a story, the individual poem needs explication. The student should know the setting of the poem, the meaning of the obscure terms, and the identification of characters mentioned. He must be introduced to the circumstances around which the poem is created in order to appreciate fully the meaning of the work. There is nothing but unmitigated horror in the outcome of "My Last Duchess" unless the student knows to begin with that the setting is Italy during the Renaissance when romantic love had nothing to do with the making of a marriage. Not many students of literature have the ability to understand and hence to appreciate poetry without some help from those who have already been initiated into its mysteries. If the author were sure of his book being used only by the man of literary taste, perhaps his policy of omission of annotations would be entirely right, but if he aims at the student, then the lack of annotations is inexcusable.[14]

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14 This condemnation applies particularly to World Literature and Our Heritage of World Literature, which contain no annotations but attempt to cover important writers of many lands.

Footnotes and a handbook in the back were combined by only one book, Literature in English. Of his lack of annotation, the author says in the preface:

> Editorial comment has been kept at a minimum. We have tried especially to avoid appreciations or specific interpretations, preferring to leave the reader free to make up his own mind. A handbook of literary terms is immediately available in the back of the book.[15]

To my way of thinking this is a highly artificial attitude. The student may accept or reject the interpretations of the editor, but he will at least have a better understanding of the selections for having read some sort of explanation. Any text book with all necessary notes in the back is most awkward to use. The thumbing back and forth tires the student before he is half through his assignment, and study becomes a task rather than a pleasure.

This much in favor of Literature in English must be said. First, the selections used are published under the title of the book of poems in which they first appeared. For example, "My Last Duchess" is identified with Bells and Pomegranates, No. III Dramatic Lyrics; this is information which no other anthologist gives.

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15 Russell, p. iii.

Secondly, among the alphabetically arranged notes in the "Handbook of Literary Terms" are some annotations which are not found elsewhere, such as the definition of a dramatic monologue:

> A poem composed of the words of a single speaker who, during a significant incident, intentionally or unintentionally, reveals to a listener his immediate motives and his character.....The monologue, which is the poem, presents the speaker's character by means of his conduct during an incident which is taking place as he talks. This is the essence of the dramatic method; the incident in "My Last Duchess" is thus not the duke's disposal of the duchess but his suggesting to the emissary the behavior proper in the next duchess.[16]

The third group of books, those which have only footnotes for annotations, The English Heritage, From Beowulf to Thomas Hardy, Eleven British Writers, and Western World Literature, seem to find brevity a paramount virtue. A great many necessary terms are not explained. In "My Last Duchess" Ferrara, which is the setting of the poem, is explained by only two of these books and then only in a brief manner.

> Ferrara is a town in northern Italy. The character and story of the Duke may be founded on those of a real sixteenth century duke of Ferrara.[17]

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16 Russell, p. 1102.

17 Shafer, II., p. 667.

> A town in northern Italy, the dukes of which were noted art patrons.[18]

Group four, consisting of six anthologies which carry both headnotes and footnotes, may be subdivided into those in which brevity is the chief characteristic of the notes and those which have really adequate annotation. The notes in Literature of England, Vol. II., British Poetry and Prose, and the Century Readings in English Literature are for the most part brief. Those in Writers of the Western World, English Literature and its Backgrounds, The College Survey of English Literature are quite adequate.

Examples of annotation from the first three of this group do reveal a little more of the situation as:

> The speaker is the Duke of Ferrara. Ferrara is an old proud city in northern Italy. The Duke is negotiating with an envoy for the hand of a Count's daughter.[19]

Criticism of this note is that the Duke should have been described as proud in place of the city as the city played no part in the poem. The last phrase, "the hand of a Count's daughter" is very awkward.

Another anthologist merely states the situation and

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[18] Robbins, p. 1238.

[19] Woods, II., p. 659.

not the setting which is given in many of the annotations.

> The Duke shows the portrait of his late wife to the envoy from his fiancee's father. His monologue subtly reveals his own character as well as that of his "last duchess."[20]

The converse of this is given in another anthology; the setting is given but not the situation.

> (Ferrara, which Browning gives as the scene of his poem, is a town in north Italy, not far from Venice. It is the capital of the House of Este, who were among the most accomplished and the most cruel of the tyrants of the Italian Renascence.)[21]

Three anthologies provide useful headnotes and footnotes: Writers of the Western World, English Literature and its Backgrounds, and The College Survey of English Literature.

From this group comes an introduction to "My Last Duchess" which gives setting, situation and technique:

> Browning varies the techniques of his dramatic monologues; the Spanish monk soliloquizes, but the Duke of Ferrara (a city near Venice) talks to the envoy with whom he is negotiating for a bride and shows him the portrait of his late wife.[22]

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20 Lieder, II., p. 565.

21 Cunliffe, p. 852.

22 Whiting, II., p. 538.

Adding to this information, a second anthologist gives editorial comment on the characters of both the duke and the duchess.

> This famous dramatic monologue, whose setting is Ferrara, shows Browning's gift for compressing drama into a comparatively few lines. The characterization is admirable. As the Duke speaks of his former wife's portrait, we see into the cold materialism of his heart and sense the sweetness and graciousness of the woman who could not please him. Browning seems to reflect that it is possible for a man to have, like the Duke, refined tastes and still be inhuman.[23]

Without the editorial comment on character but still very adequate is this headnote on "My Last Duchess."

> Ferrara, in northern Italy, was the home of the House of Este during the Renaissance. In "My Last Duchess" the Duke of Este is presented in a dramatic monologue speaking to the representative of a family seeking an alliance with the Duke through the marriage of their daughter. The Duke of Este amuses himself by relating to the negotiator the fate of his "last duchess."[24]

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23 Grebanier, II., p. 562.

24 Hibbard, p. 796.

CHAPTER V

ANNOTATIONS OF SPECIFIC POEMS

In a poetry assignment the student reads the poem once and wonders at its meaning. He is generally puzzled by references--particularly those to Greek mythology and far-away places--and he throws up his hands in disgust! He does not like poetry, he decides quickly. If there are footnotes, he reads them over. If he re-reads the poem in the light of the footnotes, the lines mean something to him; they are more than a musical arrangement of words without meaning.

The reason that poetry is so rich in meaning is that we find hidden values in it every time we read it although we have seen the poem a hundred times. Consider "My Last Duchess." The writer has read this poem not less than four hundred times aloud to her students, attempting to show in tone of voice and gesture the harsh proud nature of the duke. A new understanding of the poem resulted from the present study of annotations on it. One footnote pointed out that the duke was proud of his rich art collection, which he was showing to the envoy. This suggested the idea that there was a motive

in his showing something he hoarded for his own pleasure, and that motive was to impress the envoy with the elevation of his taste, so that the envoy might understand that a sizable dowry would be expected of his master, the Count.

In this study of annotations the most popular poems will be considered. How was the poem treated by the anthologists? What could have been added to make the poem more understandable? To begin with we shall look at "My Last Duchess," the headnotes for which have already been considered. The best set of footnotes are those in the College Survey of English Literature.

My Last Duchess

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now: Fra Pandolf's hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will't please you sit and look at her? I said
"Fra Pandolf" by design, for never read
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there; so, not the first,
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not
Her husband's presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps
Fra Pandolf chanced to say, "Her mantle laps
Over my lady's wrist too much," or "Paint
Must never hope to reproduce the faint
Half-flush that dies along her throat": such stuff

Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
For calling up that spot of joy. She had
A heart--how shall I say?--too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed: she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
Sir, 'twas all one! My favour at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace--all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
Or blush, at least. She thanked men,--good!
but thanked
Somehow--I know not how--as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
In speech--(which I have not)--to make your
will
Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just
this
Or that in you disgust me; here you miss,
Or there exceed the mark"--and if she let
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,
--E'en then would be some stooping; and I
choose
Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no
doubt,
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed
without
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave
commands;
Then all smiles stopped together. There
she stands
As if alive. Will't please you rise?
We'll meet
The company below, then. I repeat,
The Count your master's known munificent
Is ample warrant that no just pretence
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
At starting, is my object. May, we'll go
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,

Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze
for me!.

3. Fra Pandolf. Brother Pandolf, an imaginary painter, a monk.[1]

8. The depth and passion of its earnest glance. Spoken ironically.[2]

9-10. Since none...but I. The Duke is a "man of property"; his art treasures are for him alone. Probably it pleases him to know that he has the image of his dead wife as he never had the original--absolutely under his control. The important thing is to understand that no sentiment is indicated.[3]

This is an idea that no other anthologist expresses.

33-34. My gift--anybody's gift. Evidently the social position of the Duchess was inferior to that of her husband.[4]

The student might be given the additional information that during the Italian Renaissance marriages between upper class people were made for social or political advantages. The girl had no choice. The nine-hundred-year-old name meant that the family name could

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[1]Whiting, II., p. 538.

[2]Ibid., p. 538.

[3]Ibid., p. 538.

[4]Ibid., p. 538.

be traced back nine hundred years. The Duke was exceedingly proud of his ancestry.

> 45-46. I gave commands...When Hiram Corson asked Browning if this meant that the Duchess was put to death, he first replied affirmatively, then added, "or he might have had her shut up in a convent. In any event, he broke her heart and was responsible for her death."[5]

A reader who understands the character of the Duchess who was delighted with all the little things, as the "bough of cherries," "the white mule," the compliment of the painter, would know that she was capable of being happy, even in a convent. But it is doubtful that she ever entered a convent, for as the Duke turns from her portrait to say, "There she stands, as if alive," the impression is conveyed that the Duchess is dead.

> 53-54. Nay.....Too cruel to be aware that his heartlessness has shocked the envoy, the Duke is most condescending. The two men descend the stairs, side by side, as if they were equals.[6]
>
> 54-56. Notice.....for me. Neptune is the god of the sea. Claus is an imaginary sculptor. Innsbruck in the Tyrol was famous for its

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[5]Whiting, II., p. 539.

[6]Ibid., p. 539.

> statues. This touch completes the revelation of the Duke's character. He can turn without qualm from one art treasure, the portrait of a woman whose life he ruined, to another which depicts a scene in mythology.[7]

He did not share his treasures with everyone; he showed them to the envoy so that the envoy might realize that he was a man of importance and as such was entitled to a large dowry.

* * *

The second poem frequently reprinted in the anthologies is "The Bishop Orders His Tomb at Saint Praxed's Church." Under the title is the sub-title, Rome 15__. Consider first the headnotes used by the various anthologists.

> I know of no other piece of modern English prose or poetry in which there is so much told, as in these lines, of the Renaissance spirit,--its worldliness, inconsistency, pride, hypocrisy, ignorance of itself, love of art, of luxury, and of good Latin. It is nearly all that I have said of the central Renaissance in thirty pages of the Stones of Venice, put into as many lines, Browning's also being the antecedent work.--John Ruskin, Modern Painters, Vol. 4.[8]

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[7]Whiting, II., p. 539.

[8]Ibid., p. 540.

Used as a footnote but referred from the title and concerning the poem as a whole is the following:

> Published in 1845. In October, 1844, Browning visited the church of S. Prassede in Rome; but apparently he did not have the life of any individual bishop in mind when he wrote.[9]

Grebanier gives as a headnote the same quotations from Ruskin's Modern Painters but he adds more of the quotation:

> The worst of it is that this kind of concentrated writing needs so much solution before the reader can fairly get the good of it, that people's patience fails them, and they give the thing up as insoluble; though, truly, it ought to be to the current of common thought like Saladin's talisman, dipped in clear water, not soluble altogether, but making the element medicinal.--Ruskin.[10]

Lieder also quotes John Ruskin's Modern Painters. He prefaces all the material from Ruskin already quoted with:

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[9]Shafer, II., p. 673.

[10]Grebanier, II., p. 565.

> Students of the Renaissance have praised this dramatic lyric highly for the manner in which it re-creates the temper of the age. Ruskin's estimate is often cited:[11]

More original is Osgood, but he ends quoting Ruskin:

> Santa Prassede is a small church in Rome. Browning took little from the church, however, except its name. His description does not correspond with what now exists, though the church was remodeled in 1869. The poem is, of course, a portrait of a luxurious churchman, drawn upon a rich background of the Italian Renaissance.[12]

Ruskin is also quoted in the middle of the head-note used by Woods:

> Ruskin's high tribute to this dramatic monologue in which Browning has interpreted the spirit of the Renaissance is colored by the critic's dislike of the whole period, but contains, nevertheless, an admirable list of traits that the Bishop revealed in his last orders.....The Bishop is a typical prelate of the sixteenth century, a scholar learned in pagan lore, a priest filled with visions of the saints, mystic, artist, child of the world.[13]

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[11]Lieder, II., p. 570.

[12]Osgood, p. 1118.

[13]Woods, II., p. 670.

Woods adds a note on the title:

> The church is named after the virgin St. Praxed, or Praxedes, a Christian saint of the first century. Both the bishop and the tomb are imaginary.[14]

In considering the poem itself we shall quote a few lines and then give all the footnotes of the various anthologists which refer to these lines.

"The Bishop Orders His Tomb at Saint Praxed's Church"

Rome 15__

> Vanity, saith the preacher, vanity!
> Draw round my bed; is Anselm keeping back?
> Nephews--sons mine....ah, God, I know not!
> Well!
> She, men would have to be your mother once,
> Old Gandolf envied me, so fair she was![15]

> 1:2 Vanity of vanities. saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity.[16]
>
> 1. See Ecclesiastes 1:2.[17]

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[14] Ibid., p. 670.

[15] "The Bishop Orders His Tomb at Saint Praxed's Church," l. 1-6.

[16] Woods, II., p. 670.

[17] Whiting, II., p. 540.

3. Nephews. by a pious fiction, since, of course, they were his illegitimate children.[18]

5. Gandolf. the Bishop's hated predecessor and rival in love.[19]

What's done is done, and she is dead beside,
Dead long ago, and I am Bishop since,
And as she died so must we die ourselves,
And thence ye may perceive the world's a dream.
Life, how and what is it? As here I lie
In this state-chamber, dying by degrees,
Hours and long hours, in the dead night, I ask,[20]

"Do I live, am I dead?" Peace, peace seems all.
Saint Praxed's ever was the church for peace;
And so, about this tomb of mine. I fought
With tooth and nail to save my niche, ye know--
Old Gandolf cozened me despite my care;
Shrewd was that snatch from out the corner South
He graced his carrion with, God curse the same!
Yet still my niche is not so cramped but thence
One sees the pulpit o' the epistle-side,
And somewhat of the choir, those silent seats,
And up into the aery dome where live
The angels and a sunbeam's sure to lurk;[21]

17. cozened, cheated, fooled.[22]

---

[18] Ibid., p. 540.

[19] Ibid., p. 540.

[20] "The Bishop Orders His Tomb at Saint Praxed's Church," l. 7-12.

[21] "The Bishop Orders His Tomb," lines 6-24.

[22] Lieder, II., p. 570.

21. <u>epistle-side</u>. the right side of the church, to one facing the altar.[23]

21. <u>epistle-side</u>. the right or south side of the altar, the side on which a passage from the apostolical epistles is read in the communion service.[24]

21. <u>Epistle-side</u>. the right side of the altar as one faces it from the nave.[25]

21. <u>epistle-side</u>. the side of the altar from which the Epistles of the New Testament are read. In the liturgy, this reading occurs between the collect and the Gospel.[26]

And I shall fill my slab of basalt there,
And 'neath my tabernacle take my rest,
With those nine columns round me, two and two,
The odd one at my feet where Anselm stands:
Peach-blossom marble all, the rare, the ripe
As fresh-poured red wine of a mighty pulse.
--Old Gandolf with his paltry onion-stone,
Put me where I may look at him![27]

25. <u>basalt</u>. a hard marble.[28]

25. <u>basalt</u>. a hard rock of dark color.[29]

---

[23]Osgood, p. 1119.

[24]Shafer, II., p. 673.

[25]Weatherly, II., p. 359.

[26]Lieder, II., p. 571.

[27]"The Bishop Orders His Tomb," l. 25-32.

[28]Osgood, p. 1119.

[29]Woods, II., p. 671.

26. tabernacle. a canopy over the tomb.[30]

26. tabernacle. a protecting canopy.[31]

29. Peach-blossom marble. exceptionally fine marble of a pinkish hue.[32]

30. pulse. pressed grapes.[33]

30. of....pulse. of great strength.[34]

31. onion-stone. a cheap marble that splits into layers like an onion.[35]

31. onion-stone. an inferior marble that peels readily.[36]

31. onion-stone. an inferior greenish marble that easily splits, into thin layers like those of the onion. It is called cipollino, from cipolla (onion).[37]

And corded up in a tight olive-frail,
Some lump, ah God, of lapis lazuli.[38]

---

[30]Whiting, II., p. 540.

[31]Woods, II., p. 670.

[32]Ibid., p. 670.

[33]Weatherly, II., p. 359.

[34]Woods, II., p. 670.

[35]Grebanier, II., p. 565.

[36]Osgood, p. 1118.

[37]Woods, II., p. 670.

[38]"The Bishop Orders His Tomb," l. 41-42.

41. olive-frail. a basket for holding olives.[39]

41. olive-frail. a rush-basket.[40]

42. lapis-lazuli. a semi-precious stone.[41]

42. lapis-lazuli. a valuable blue stone, stolen by the Bishop from his own church.[42]

Sons, all have I bequeathed you, villas, all,
That brave Frascati villa with its bath
So let the blue lump poise between my knees,
Like God the Father's globe on both his hands
Ye worship in the Jesu Church so gay,
.....
Swift as a weaver's shuttle fleet our years:
.....
The bas-relief in bronze ye promised me,
Those Pans and Nymphs ye wot of, and perchance
Some tripod, thyrsus, with a vase or so,
The Savior at his sermon on the mount,
Saint Praxed in a glory, and one Pan
Ready to twitch the Nymph's last garment off,
And Moses with the tables.....[43]

46. Frascati. a fashionable district, near Rome.[44]

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[39]Woods, II., p. 671.

[40]Grebanier, II., p. 565.

[41]Osgood, p. 1119.

[42]Woods, II., p. 671.

[43]"The Bishop Orders His Tomb," l. 45-49, 51, 56-62.

[44]Whiting, II., p. 540.

49. Jesu Church. There is or was such an image as the Bishop refers to in the Church of the Jesuits in Rome. With characteristic irreverence the Bishop would take upon himself the posture of God.[45]

49. Jesu Church. Il Gesu, the Church of the Jesuits in Rome; it contains an image of God holding a globe made of lapis lazuli.[46]

49. Jesu Church. the Gesu, principal church of the Jesuits, one of the richest and most highly ornamented in Rome.[47]

51. Swift....years. From Job, 7:6: "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope.[48]

56-62. The bas-relief...the tables. The mingling of Christian and pagan symbolism is characteristic of the Renaissance (see Milton's "Lycidas"). Here it is also intended to show the Bishop's lack of respect for sacred things. Pan (l. 57) was the god of the fields. The priestess of Apollo at Delphi sat on a tripod (l. 58); the worshipers of Dionysos carried a thyrsus (l. 58). The sermon on the mount (l. 59) is recorded in Matthew 5-7. Moses gets the tables of the Law (l. 62) from Yahweh on Mount Sinai in Exodus 24ff.[49]

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[45] Ibid., II., p. 540.

[46] Woods, II., p. 671.

[47] Osgood, p. 1119.

[48] Woods, II., p. 671.

[49] Whiting, II., p. 540.

57. Pan. Pan was the god of flocks and pastures. The bas-relief was to contain a curious mixture of pagan and Christian symbols.[50]

58. tripod. a three-legged stool used by the priestess of Apollo at Delphi; thyrsus, a Bacchanalian staff.[51]

58. thyrsus. a wand carried by the followers of Bacchus, a staff bearing ivy and vine leaves and often crowned with a pine cone.[52]

.....Ah, ye hope
To revel down my villas, while I gasp
Bricked o'er with beggar's moldy travertine
.....
Nay, boys, ye love me--all of jasper, then!
.....
And have I not Saint Praxed's ear to pray
Horses for ye, and brown Greek manuscripts,
.....
--That's if ye carve my epitaph aright
Choice Latin, picked phrase, Tully's every word,
No gaudy ware like Gandolf's second line--
Tully, my masters? Ulpian serves his need![53]

66. Travertine. a kind of white limestone.[54]

Travertine. a limestone from Tivoli, near Rome.[55]

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[50]Woods, II., p. 671.

[51]Osgood, p. 1119.

[52]Hibbard, p. 799.

[53]"The Bishop Orders His Tomb," Lines 64-66, 68, 76-79.

[54]Woods, II., p. 671.

[55]Osgood, p. 1119.

68. jasper. a dark green smooth stone.[56]

74. brown. brown with age.[57]

77-79. Choice Latin...his need! The Bishop's love of pure Latin is one of the few sincere things about him. Tully is Cicero, whom the Bishop takes as setting the standard. He regards Ulpian, a Roman jurist (170-228) as far below Tully's level.[58]

77. Tully's.....word. in the style of Cicero (106-43 B.C.), i.e., the purest classic Latin.
79. Ulpian, a noted Roman jurist (170-228), whose Latin style was apparently inferior to that of Cicero.[59]

And then how I shall lie through centuries,
And hear the blessed mutter of the mass,
And see God made and eaten all day long,
And feel the steady candle-flame, and taste
Good strong thick stupefying incense-smoke!
For as I lie here, hours of the dead night,
Dying in state and by such slow degrees,
I fold my arms as if they clasped a crook,
And stretch my feet forth straight as stone
can point,
And let the bedclothes, for a mortcloth, drop
Into great laps and folds of sculptor's-work:[60]

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[56]Woods, II., p. 671.

[57]Ibid., p. 671.

[58]Whiting, II., p. 541.

[59]Woods, II., p. 671.

[60]"The Bishop Orders His Tomb", Lines 80-90.

82. God...long. in the sacrament of the Mass.[61]

82. made and eaten. during Mass the priest is believed to convert the bread into the body of Christ.[62]

80-84. And then how...incense-smoke! These lines contain a reference to the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubtantiation, the belief that every time the mass is celebrated a miracle occurs and the bread and wine on the altar become the body and blood of Christ. But Browning makes even this reference to a sacred mystery point the Bishop's sensuality; the passage is almost cannibalistic. The dying man has no interest in the spiritual significance of the service or of the sacrament, and probably no belief in it; on the other hand, it interests him tremendously as a colorful pageant.[63]

87. crook. a crozier, the pastoral staff of a bishop; it is the symbol of his office as shepherd of the flock.[64]

89. mortcloth. a funeral pall.[65]

Grow, with a certain humming in my ears
About the life before I lived this life,
And this life too, popes, cardinals, and priests,

---

[61]Woods, II., p. 671.

[62]Weatherly, II., p. 100.

[63]Whiting, II., p. 541.

[64]Woods, II., p. 671.

[65]Ibid., II., p. 671.

Saint Praxed at his sermon on the mount,
Your tall pale mother with her talking eyes,
And new-found agate urns as fresh as day,
And marble's language, Latin pure, discreet--
Aha, ELUCESCEBAT quoth our friend?[66]

95. Saint Praxed at his sermon. SaintPraxed (Prassede) was a female saint of first-century Rome. This is one of several indications that the Bishop's mind is wandering.[67]

95. Saint Praxed...mount. the confusion of Saint Praxed with Christ shows how the Bishop's mind is beginning to wander.[68]

99. ELUCESCEBAT. He shone.[69]

99. ELUCESCEBAT. He was famous. Ulpian was a Roman jurist of the third century A.D. Cicero (Tully), the orator of the first century B.C., used the purer form elucebat.[70]

99. ELUCESCEBAT. He was famous. The Bishop hates the form of the word, the classic form being elucebat.[71]

Ever your eyes were as a lizard's quick,
They glitter like your mother's for my soul,

---

[66]"The Bishop Orders His Tomb," Lines 91-99.

[67]Whiting, II., p. 541.

[68]Weatherly, II., p. 100.

[69]Shafer, II., p. 674.

[70]Russell, p. 944.

[71]Woods, II., p. 671.

Or ye would heighten my impoverished frieze,
Piece out its starved design, and fill my vase
With grapes, and add a visor and a Term,
And to the tripod ye would tie a lynx
That in his struggle throws the thyrsus down,
To comfort me on my entablature
Whereon I am to lie till I must ask
"Do I live, am I dead?" There, leave me, there!
For ye have stabbed me with ingratitude
To death--ye wish it--God, ye wish it!
Stone--
Gritstone, a-crumble![72]

108. visor. mask. term, combined bust and pedestal.[73]

108. term. bust on a pedestal.[74]

108. term. antique boundary post with carved head.[75]

116. Gritstone. coarse sandstone.[76]

* * *

The third poem to be considered is "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister." First, the headnotes.

> In this shocking and amusing monologue we hear the voice of a man who has "fallen in hate."

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[72]"The Bishop Orders His Tomb", Lines 104-116.

[73]Woods, II., p. 671.

[74]Weatherly, II., p. 360.

[75]Shafer, II., p. 108.

[76]Weatherly, II., p. 360.

The easily contented, somewhat puttering, probably not too intelligent Brother Lawrence gets "on the nerves" of the speaker. Being cloistered, he cannot escape from the object of his detestation, and his hatred has poisoned his whole life. In stanza 4 he imputes his own sensuality to Lawrence; in stanza 5 he bolsters his own egoism with the reminder that he is a better formalist than the other man. In stanzas 7 and 8 he speculates on the possibility of tricking Lawrence out of his salvation; note the implicit admission that unless he is tricked, Lawrence is sure of it. Browning leaves the construction in both stanzas incomplete grammatically, the implication being "Do you suppose I could do that?" But by the time we reach stanza 9 our speaker is desperate. He is not playing for high stakes now; he would risk his own soul to be able to destroy a rosebush.[77]

This soliloquy of a nameless Spanish friar is a brilliant study of petty jealousy and vindictive meanness. The speaker reveals his own character, and also that of his "heart's abhorrence," Brother Lawrence.[78]

As in "My Last Duchess," we understand the baseness of the speaker despite his good opinion of himself. His hated fellow monk is equally vivid to us as a man of beautiful character. Perhaps no poet before him would have dreamed of opening and closing a poem with such phrases as Browning here employs.[79]

---

[77] Whiting, II., p. 537.

[78] Lieder, II., p. 567.

[79] Grebanier, II., p. 562.

At the meal we sit together:
   Salve tibi! I must hear
Wise talk of the kind of weather,
   Sort of season, time of year:
Not a plenteous cork-crop: scarcely
   Dare we hope oak-galls, I doubt:
What's the Latin name for "parsley"?
   What's the Greek name for Swine's Snout?[80]

10. Salve tibi. Hail to thee.[81]

10. Salve tibi. Greetings to you. The monks conversed in Latin.[82]

10. Salve tibi. Save you.[83]

14. oak-galls. Excrescences, made on oak trees by insects, used in manufacturing ink.[84]

Saint, forsooth! While brown Dolores
   Squats outside the Convent bank
With Sanchicha, telling stories,
   Steeping tresses in the tank,
Blue-black, lustrous, thick like horsehairs,
   --Can't I see his dead eye glow,
Bright as 'twere a Barbary corsair's?
   (That is, if he'd let it show!)[85]

---

[80]"The Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister," Lines, 9-16.

[81]Whiting, II., p. 537.

[82]Grebanier, II., p. 563.

[83]Robbins, p. 1244.

[84]Shafer, II., p. 668.

[85]"The Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister," Lines 25-32.

31. Barbary corsair. a privateer or pirate of the Barbary coast (North Africa) not noted for sexual or any other virtues.[86]

When he finishes refection,
   Knife and fork he never lays
Cross-wise, to my recollection,
   As do I, is Jesu's praise.
I the Trinity illustrate,
   Drinking watered orange-pulp--
In three sips the Arian frustrate;
   While he drains his at one gulp.[87]

33. refection. the meal.[88]

39. Arian. Arius denied the equality of the Son with God the Father. The Council of Nicea (325 A.D.), where he was opposed by Athanasius, condemned his views.[89]

39. Arian. in the fourth century, denied the Trinity, and his followers were branded heretics.[90]

39. Arian. The Arians believed that Christ was inferior to God, who had created Him. The monk wants to show his belief in the Trinity.[91]

---

[86] Whiting, II., p. 537.

[87] "The Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister," Lines 33-40.

[88] Hibbard, p. 797.

[89] Whiting, II., p. 537.

[90] Osgood, p. 1104.

[91] Grebanier, II., p. 563.

There's a great text in Galatians,
   Once you trip on it, entails
Twenty-nine distinct damnations,
   One sure, if another fails:
If I trip him just a-dying,
   Sure of heaven as sure can be,
Spin him round and send him flying
   Off to hell, a Manichee?[92]

49. Galatians. The particular text that Browning may have had in mind has not been identified.[93]

49. Galatians. Probably Galations 5:19-21.[94]

49. Galatians. Galatians 5:19-21 lists "the works of the flesh" which damn a man.[95]

49. Galatians. probably a reference to Galations v, 19-21, which lists seventeen "works of the flesh" and states that "They which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."[96]

49. Galatians. Galatians 3:10 "which in turn refers to Deuteronomy 28) and Galatians 5:19-21 have both been suggested. The latter passage enumerates only seventeen sins, but one of them is heresy, the sin of which our speaker plans to "get" Brother Lawrence. The Church taught that the eternal state of the soul depends on its spiritual condition at the moment of death. (See Hamlet's reluctance to kill the King at prayer, Hamlet, Act III, sc. 3).[97]

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[92]"The Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister", Lines 49-56.

[93]Lieder, V., p. 567.

[94]Shafer, II., p. 669.

[95]Osgood, p. 1105.

[96]Weatherly, II., p. 357.

[97]Whiting, II., p. 538.

56. Manichee. A sect whose religion was a combination of Christianity and the Persian Zoroastrianism.[98]

56. Manichee. Follower of the Persian Manes, subscriber to a dualistic doctrine not then popular with the Church.[99]

56. Manichee. Adherents of the Persian Manes, argued the existence of two controlling factors --light (good) and darkness (evil).[100]

Or, my scrofulous French novel
   On gray paper with blunt type!
Simply glance at it, you grovel
   Hand and foot in Belial's gripe:
If I double down its pages
   At the woeful sixteenth print,
When he gathers his greengages,
   Ope a sieve and slip it in't?[101]

60. Belial's. the devil's.[102]

Belial's, used loosely as a synonym for Satan's.[103]

61. double. bend over.[104]

63. greengages. greenish plums.[105]

---

[98]Grebanier, II., p. 563.

[99]Hibbard, p. 797.

[100]Robbins, p. 1245.

[101]"The Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister," Lines 57-64.

[102]Lieder, II., p. 567.

[103]Whiting, II., p. 538.

[104]Lieder, II., p. 567.

[105]Ibid., p. 567.

> .....Hy, Zy, Hine...
> 'St there's Vespers! Plena gratia
> Ave, Virgo! Gr-r-r--you swine![106]

70. Hy, Zy, Hine. probably indicating the sound of the vesper bells.[107]

71-72. Plena...Virgo! Hail, Virgin, full of grace, a formal prayer.[108]

Plena...Virgo! Hail, Mary, full of grace![109]

* * *

The fourth poem is "Why I am a Liberal," one of the few sonnets which Browning wrote. In presenting it one anthology used neither headnote or footnote, three gave the date of publishing only, 1885, one used a headnote and one, a footnote. They follow:

> This sonnet was Browning's contribution to a book, Why I Am a Liberal, compiled and edited by Andrew Reid in 1885. It is Browning's answer to the question.[110]

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[106] "The Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister," Lines 70-73.

[107] Whiting, II., p. 538.

[108] Ibid., p. 538.

[109] Hibbard, p. 797.

[110] Osgood, p. 1215.

> Published in 1885 in Why I Am a Liberal, a book to which various leading liberals contributed explanations of their doctrines.[111]

* * *

"The Statue and the Bust," the fifth in our group, appears in seven of the anthologies. In most of them it is prefaced by a headnote which contains information written by Browning himself in answer to an inquiry sent to an American newspaper as:

> Published in 1855. The following inquiry was once sent to an American newspaper:
>
> 1. When, how, and where did it happen? Browning's divine vagueness lets one gather only that the lady's husband was a Riccardi.
>
> 2. Who was the lady? Who the duke?
>
> 3. The magnificent house wherein Florence lodges her prefet is known to all Florentine ballgoers as the Palazzo Riccardi. It was bought by the Riccardi from the Medici in 1659. From none of its windows did the lady gaze at her more than royal lover. From what window, then, if from any? Are the statue and the bust still in their original positions?"
>
> These questions were found by Mr. Thomas J. Wise, who sent them to Browning. He received from Browning the following reply, written on 8 January, 1887:

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[111] Shafer, II., p. 706.

"Dear Mr. Wise,--I have seldom met with such a strange inability to understand what seems the plainest matter possible: 'ball-goers' are probably not history-readers, but any guide-book would confirm what is sufficiently stated in the poem. I will append a note or two, however. 1. 'This story the townsmen tell,' 'when, how, and where,' constitutes the subject of the poem. 2. The lady was the wife of Riccardi; and the duke, Ferdinand, just as the poem says. 3. As it was built by, and inhabited by, the Medici till sold, long after, to the Riccardi, it was not from the duke's palace, but a window in that of the Riccardi, that the lady gazed at her lover riding by. The statue is still in its place, looking at the window under which 'now is the empty shrine.' Can anything be clearer? My 'vagueness' leaves what to be 'gathered' when all these things are put down in black and white? Oh, 'ball-goers'![112]

Osgood does not use the letter of inquiry in his headnotes, but he does use Browning's reply to Mr. Thomas Wise.[113]

Grebanier uses the same interrogatory letter and the same answer in his headnotes but he adds in brackets:

> (Browning here employs the terza rima of the Divine Comedy (cf. Vol. I, p. 102).)[114]

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[112] Shafer, II., p. 686.

[113] Osgood, p. 1137.

[114] Grebanier, II., p. 568.

Lieder takes the questions and answers out of the letter form and reprints them here. He also gives the same information about the mechanics of the stanzas:

> Note the use of the terza rima of Dante: aba, bcb, cdc, etc.[115]

> There's a palace in Florence, the world knows well,
> And a statue watches it from the square,
> And this story of both do our townsmen tell.[116]

> 1. Palace in Florence. Palazzo Antionori, the home of the Riccardi family at the time of the story. Florence was also the birthplace of Dante, whose Divine Comedy was written in terza rima, as in this poem.[117]

> 2. statue. a statue of the Grand Duke Ferdinand I in the Piazza della Annunziata.[118]

> 2. statue. The statue is that of Ferdinand I (1659-1609), Grand Duke of Florence, it faces a palace once owned by a noble family named Riccardi. The bust, an invention of Browning's was that of the wife of the head of the Riccardi family.[119]

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[115] Lieder, p. 584.

[116] "The Statue and the Bust," Lines, 1-3.

[117] Whiting, II., p. 554.

[118] Robbins, p. 1240.

[119] Weatherly, II., p. 370.

The Duke rode past in his idle way,
Empty and fine like a swordless sheath.[120]

15. Empty...sheath. because he had no purpose in his life. Compare ll. 25-26.[121]

Hair in heaps lay heavily
Over a pale brow spirit-pure--
Carved like the heart of the coal-black tree,

Crisped like a war-steed's encolure--
And vainly sought to dissemble her eyes.[122]

21-22. Carved...Crisped. Both refer to the lady's hair. encolure, mane.[123]

22. encolure. neck and shoulders.[124]

23. dissemble. in the sense of hide.[125]

And lo, a blade for a knight's emprise
Filled the empty sheath of a man,--[126]

---

[120]"The Statue and the Bust," ll. 14-15.

[121]Whiting, II., p. 554.

[122]"The Statue and the Bust," ll. 19-23.

[123]Whiting, II., p. 554.

[124]Robbins, p. 1241.

[125]Whiting, II., p. 554.

[126]"The Statue and the Bust," ll. 25-26.

25. emprise. enterprise.[127]

A feast was held that selfsame night
In the pile which the mighty shadow makes.
For Via Larga is three-parts light,
But the palace overshadows one,
Because of a crime, which may God requite![128]

33. pile....makes. The Palace of Ferdinand.[129]

33. pile. the Grand Duke's palace, later sold to the Riccardi and now known as the Palazzo Riccardi. (Not to be confused with the palace in l. i, in which the lady was confined.)[130]

34. Via Larga. now Via Cavour.[131]

36. crime. the destruction of the city's freedom by Cosimo de Medici, who built the Palazzo Riccardi in 1430. His son was Piero the Gouty, his grandson Lorenzo the Magnificent.[132]

36. crime. committed by Cosimo de Medici (1389-1464), who destroyed the liberties of Florence and became a virtual dictator.[133]

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[127]Whiting, II., p. 555.

[128]"The Statue and the Bust," ll. 32-36.

[129]Shafer, II., p. 687.

[130]Whiting, II., p. 555.

[131]Ibid., p. 555.

[132]Ibid., p. 555.

[133]Weatherly, II., p. 371.

To Florence and God the wrong was done,
Through the first republic's murder there
By Cosimo and his cursed son.)[134]

39. Cosimo de' Medici (1389-1464) was the first of the brilliant family that freed art and destroyed republican government in Florence.[135]

Face to face the lovers stood
A single minute and no more,
While the bridegroom bent as a man subdued--
.....

Calmly he said that her lot was cast,
That the door she had passed was shut on her
Till the final catafalk repassed.[136]

43. lovers the Grand Duke and the Riccardi bride.[137]

57. catafalk. hearse.[138]

I fly to the Duke who loves me well,
Sit by his side and laugh as sorrow
Ere I count another ave-bell.

Tis only the coat of a page to borrow,
And tie my hair in a horse-boy's trim,
And I save my soul--but not to-morrow--[139]

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[134]"The Statue and the Bust," ll. 37-39.

[135]Osgood, p. 138.

[136]"The Statue and the Bust," l. 43-45, 55-57.

[137]Whiting, II., p. 555.

[138]Ibid., p. 555.

[139]"The Statue and the Bust," l. 70-72, 73-75.

72. ave-bell. When it sounds, evening and morning, the Ave-Maria is repeated.[140]

75. but not to-morrow. an indication of the fatal sloth which wrecked the lovers. See l. 112.[141]

What if we break from the Arno bowers,
And try if Petraja, cool and green,
Cure last night's fault with this morning's
flowers?[142]

94. Arno, the river on which Florence is situated.[143]

95. Petraja. the duke's country villa.[144]

But, alas! my lady leaves the South
Each wind that comes from the Apennine
Is a menace to her tender youth:
.....

One day as the lady saw her youth
Depart, and the silver thread that streaked
Her hair, and, worn by the serpent's tooth,
.....

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[140]Whiting, II., p. 555.

[141]Ibid., p. 555.

[142]"The Statue and the Bust," l. 94-96.

[143]Whiting, II., p. 555.

[144]Weatherly, II., p. 373.

Let Robbia's craft so apt and strange
Arrest the remains of young and fair,
And rivet them while the seasons range.[145]

100. leaves. comes from.[146]

101. Apennine. a mountain range near Florence.[147]

159. the serpent's tooth. age, care, frustration.[148]

169. Robbia's craft. Andrea della Robbia (1437-c.1528) and his sons, Giovanni and Girolamo, were famous workers in terra cotta.[149]

169. Robbia's craft. Robbia is not here the name of the artist (the last famous Robbia had died in 1566), but is applied to the kind of work done by the Robbias--terra-cotta relief work covered with enamel.[150]

169. Robbia's craft. The last of the Della Robbias, famous Florentine sculptors and ceramists, died in 1566, but their terra-cotta work continued to be manufactured by others.[151]

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[145]"The Statue and the Bust," l. 100-102, 157-159, 169-171.

[146]Weatherly, II., p. 372.

[147]Whiting, II., p. 556.

[148]Ibid., p. 556.

[149]Lieder, II., p. 586.

[150]Shafer, II., p. 688.

[151]Whiting, II., p. 556.

But long ere Robbia's cornice, fine,
With flowers and fruits which leaves enlace,
Was set where now is the empty shrine--
.....

John of Douay shall effect my plan,
Set me on horseback here aloft,
Alive, as the crafty sculptor can,
.....

So! While these wait the trump of doom,
How do their spirits pass, I wonder,
Nights and days in the narrow room?[152]

189. empty shrine. The empty shrine is historical; the bust, unlike the Grand Duke's statue in the Piazza della Santa Annunziata, is not.[153]

202. "John of Douay. Giovanni da Bologna (1525-1608).[154]

202. "John of Douay. or Giovanni da Bologna (1524-1608), French sculptor, whose best works are in Florence. He did make the fine equestrian statue of Ferdinand.[155]

202. John of Douay. a sculptor of Bologna.[156]

216. narrow room. the grave.[157]

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[152]"The Statue and the Bust," l. 187-189, 202-204, 214-216.

[153]Whiting, II., p. 557.

[154]Ibid., p. 557.

[155]Osgood, p. 1141.

[156]Grebanier, II., p. 570.

[157]Whiting, II., p. 557.

I hear you reproach, "But delay was best,
For their end was a crime."--Oh, a crime will do
As well, I reply, to serve for a test,[158]

227. crime. the contemplated elopement.[159]

228. As well. Actually, in this instance, it serves better. Browning is trying to drive home, with the greatest possible emphasis, the idea that doing nothing is in itself a sin. Had the action the lovers were tempted to commit been a righteous action, this proposition must have been self-evident, test, of the afore-mentioned proposition.[160]

Must a game be played for the sake of pelf?
Where a button goes, 'twere an epigram
To offer the stamp of the very Guelph.
.....
The counter our lovers staked was lost
As surely as if it were lawful coin:
And the sin I impute to each frustrate ghost

Is--the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin,
Though the end in sight was a vice, I say.
You of the virtue (we issue join)
How strive you? De te, fabula![161]

233. 'twere an epigram. it would be absurd, a subject for jest. The epigram is often satirical in spirit.[162]

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[158]"The Statue and the Bust," l. 226-228.

[159]Whiting, II., p. 557.

[160]Ibid., p. 557.

[161]"The Statue and the Bust," l. 232-234, 244-246, 247-250.

[162]Whiting, II., p. 557.

234. the stamp of the very Guelph. To risk coins in a game for buttons would be foolish ostentation.[163]

234. the stamp of the very Guelph. Where a button will pass as readily as real money, it would be absurd ("an epigram", i.e., a matter of satire) to use the latter.[164]

234. Where a button....Guelph. where a button would do, it would be foolish to offer real money.--The crown of the Guelphs, the ruling faction in Italy from the twelfth to the fifteenth century, was stamped on coins.[165]

236. counter. a worthless coin, used to represent money in a gambling game.[166]

247. the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin. See Luke 12:35; also the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, Matthew 25:1-13.[167]

248. Though the end in sight was a vice. It is not a fair interpretation of Browning's meaning to say that he teaches that the lovers would have "seen God" if they had committed adultery. The matter is much more complicated than that. In an article on "The Statue and the Bust" in Poet-Lore, Vol. X. (1898), pp. 397-416, Prentiss Cummings reminds us that Guido, in "The Ring and the Book," did carry out his purpose, but that Browning does not

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[163] Lieder, p. 587.

[164] Shafer, p. 689.

[165] Weatherly, p. 374.

[166] Whiting, p. 557.

[167] Whiting, II., p. 558.

> therefore commend him. "A commendable life involves two things: first, a right purpose ;.and second, corresponding action." In the present poem, "Browning has.....knowingly suppressed the importance of a right purpose .....in order to teach with great force the duty of carrying one's purpose out; and in considering the ethics of conduct as a whole his lesson is knowingly imperfect."[168]

> 250. De te, fabula! this is your story.[169]

> 250. De te, fabula! The parable concerns you. The story has not been told for its own sake, but rather for its suggestive and symbolical value.[170]

* * *

Browning's popular 392-line dramatic monologue, "Fra Lippo Lippi" appears in ten of the anthologies. Since its chief character was a real painter, most of the books have a long introduction containing biographical material.

English Literature and its Backgrounds, II., by Grebanier and Thompson, gives an account of the life of Fra Filippo Lippi, from Giorgio Vasari, Lives of the

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[168] Whiting, II., p. 558.

[169] Lieder, II., p. 587.

[170] Whiting, II., p. 558.

Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects, as translated by Mrs. Jonathan Foster. It was this account in the original Italian which lead Browning to write his poem. About Vasari, Grebanier writes:

> Although he was an able architect and painter, Vasari's chief claim to immortality is his series of Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects. Living in an age of wretched taste, after the decline of the great Renaissance in the Italian fine arts, he was a man of superior judgment able to appreciate the masterpieces of the older artists (like Cimabue and Giotto). His Lives, first published in 1550, and rewritten and expanded in 1568, are the chief sources for our knowledge of the history of the arts in Italy during the Renaissance. Some such service Ruskin attempted to perform in his studies of Modern Painters (cf. below).
>
> Vasari's style is engaging, and his biographies are rendered more sprightly by the interspersion of anecdote. Though recent research has revised portions of Vasari's history, his work remains authoritative, sound in its critical judgments, and a classic in its field. It was a favorite with Browning, to whom it suggested the materials for his Fra Lippo Lippi (cf. below).
>
> Mrs. Foster's translation was published in 1850.[171]

Three anthologies give no headnote for "Fra Lippo Lippi" whatever. Russell does not identify the

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[171] Grebanier, II., p. 571.

painter at all. Shafer and Robbins and Coleman identify him only by a footnote which refers to Vasari's Lives of the Painters.

Six of the anthologies give fairly adequate headnotes in their introductions to "Fra Lippo Lippi." We shall quote from these:

> Browning found material for this great poem in Vasari's Lives of the Painters and in the actual paintings by Fra Lippo Lippi (d. 1469) that he studied in the galleries and churches of Florence and Rome.[172]

> Fra Lippo, a painter-monk, relates the story of his life and his philosophy to the watchmen who have just arrested him as he was stealing back, after a night of roistering, to his room in the Medici Palace.
>
> Browning's source for this poem, as for most of his poems about painters, is Vasari's Lives of the Painters (1550).[173]

> Fra Lippo Lippi (1406-1469)--Filippo Lippi--was a famous Florentine painter. The account upon which Browning based his interpretation of Lippi's life and art was found in Vasari's Lives of the Painters. Lippi is talking to Florentine guards who have caught him in a nocturnal frolic.[174]

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[172] Osgood, p. 1129.

[173] Lieder, II., p. 591.

[174] Woods, II., p. 688.

A fifteenth-century Florentine painter and monk, Fra Lippo Lippi, is here pictured caught by the watch as he tries to slip back to his room after a gay night. Browning drew frequently on Vasari's Lives of the Painters for the background of his poems.[175]

The life of Fra Lippo Lippi, a famous Florentine painter of the fifteenth century, is told in Vasari's Lives of the Painters, from which Browning derived most of the material for this poem. Lippi's patron, Cosimo de' Medici, had confined him to his room in the Medici palace until he should complete some paintings. But Lippi knotted his bedclothes together, escaped from his room, and enjoyed an evening of dissipation. On his way back, he was held for questioning by the guards; in the course of Browning's dramatic monologue, Lippi not only answers their questions, but gives an account of his whole life.[176]

Browning derived his information concerning Fra Lippo Lippi (1406-1469) from Vasari and from Filippo Baldinucci, who stresses the artist's break with the manner of his predecessors. In the poem the painter-monk is returning to the house of his patron, Cosimo de Medici (now the Palazzo Riccardi--see notes to "The Statue and the Bust"), whence he had fled to join a gay carnival crowd, when he is apprehended by the watch. In his monologue he states, among other things, his artistic creed. Art is its own justification; it is not necessary to use it to preach a sermon or to teach a lesson. Nor need the painter add "something more." If he simply employs his skill to reproduce what already exists in nature, so that those who

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[175]Hibbard, p. 801.

[176]Weatherly, II., p. 374.

carelessly passed it by at first hand may respond to its beauty on canvas, he has fulfilled the function. Both the "naturalists" and the "art for art's sake" crowd have their points of affinity with Fra Lippo Lippi!

Browning himself was neither a naturalist nor an "art for art's sake" man--nor was he a loose liver--yet it is clear that Fra Lippo Lippi held all his sympathy, as he holds ours also. He was a friar without vocation, and the special circumstances under which he entered the cloister cause us to judge his failings leniently. Browning did think of himself as opposing a certain reality to the febrile idealism of much Victorian poetry, and above all he was an enthusiastic apostle of the strenuous life. He could hardly have failed to admire a man who, whatever other Biblical adjurations he may have disregarded, at least obeyed the command "All that thy hand findeth to do, do thou with thy might."[177]

Now we shall consider the footnotes in "Fra Lippo Lippi":

> I am poor brother Lippo, by your leave!
> You need not clap your torches to my face.
> Zooks, what's to blame? you think you see a monk![178]

> 3. Zooks. an oath shortened from Gadzooks, Godzooks; the meaning of the second syllable is not clear.[179]

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[177]Whiting, II., p. 562.

[178]"Fra Lippo Lippi," l. 1-3.

[179]Woods, II., p. 688.

The Carmine's my cloister;.....
.....

Why, one, sir, who is lodging with a friend
Three streets off--he's a certain...how d'
ye call?
Master--a...Cosimo of the Medici,
I' the house that caps the corner. Boh!
you were best!
Remember and tell me the day you're hanged,
How you affected such a gullet's gripe!
.....
Zooks, are we pilchards; that they sweep
the streets
And count fair prize what comes into their net?[180]

7. The Carmine's. Lippo entered the monastery of the Carmelite friars of the Carmine in Florence in 1420.[181]

17. Cosimo of the Medici. a rich Florentine banker and ruler (1389-1465).[182]

17. Cosimo of the Medici. (1389-1464) built the house in 1430; Fra Lippo left the monastery sometime between 1430 and 1432.[183]

17. Cosimo of the Medici. (1389-1464), who built "the house that caps the corner" in 1430. The time of the poem is between that year and 1432, when Fra Lippo left his monastery.[184]

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[180]"Fra Lippo Lippi," l. 7, 15-20, 23-24.

[181]Woods, II., p. 688.

[182]Grebanier, II., p. 574.

[183]Robbins, p. 1249.

[184]Shafer, II., p. 677.

17. Cosimo of the Medici. Cosimo de' Medici (1389-1464), a rich Florentine banker, statesman, and patron of art and literature; the Medici palace, now known as the Palazzo Riccardi, is on the corner of Via Cavour and Via Gori.[185]

18. Boh! you were best! you were best release me. Cosimo's name has frightened the watchman.[186]

20. you, the captain of the guard.[187]

23. pilchards: sardines.[188]

23. pilchards: an inexpensive fish, resembling the herring.[189]

He's Judas to a tittle, that man is!
Just such a face! Why, sir, you make amends.
Lord, I'm not angry! Bid your hangdogs go
Drink out this quarter-florin to the health
Of the munificent House that harbors me
.....
.....I'd like his face--
His, elbowing on his comrade in the door
With the pike and lantern--for the slave that holds
John Baptist's head a-dangle by the hair

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[185]Woods, II., p. 688.

[186]Whiting, II., p. 562.

[187]Ibid., p. 562.

[188]Russell, p. 946.

[189]Weatherly, II., p. 374.

With one hand ("Look you, now," as who should say)
And his weapon in the other, yet unwiped!
.....
Here's spring come, and the nights one makes
up bands,
To roam the town and sing out carnival,
And I've been three weeks shut within my mew,
A-painting for the great man, saints and saints,
And saints again.....[190]

25. Judas. the betrayer of Christ. Fra Lippo Lippi sees the watchman who has displeased him with a professional eye. He would like to paint him as Judas. See ll. 31 ff.[191]

28. quarter-florin. The florin was a small gold coin first issued in Florence in 1252. It was probably worth about two dollars.[192]

33. hair. Lippi is describing a picture on the subject of the martyrdom of St. John the Baptist.[193]

33. the slave.....hair. an imaginary picture; in Lippo's real picture of the beheading of John the Baptist, the head is carried on a great platter by Salome, the daughter of Herodias. See Matthew, 14: 1-12.[194]

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[190]"Fra Lippo Lippi," l. 25-29, 31-36, 45-49.

[191]Whiting, II., p. 562.

[192]Woods, II., p. 688.

[193]Lieder, II., p. 591.

[194]Woods, II., p. 688.

46. carnival. a period of gayety preceding Lent.[195]

47. mew. a cage for birds.[196]

47. mew. coop, pen. (Lippo had been engaged to paint pictures in the palace and had been locked in a room until the work should be done.[197]

Flower of the quince,
I let Lisa go, and what good in life since?
Flower o' the thyme--
.....
.....I came up with the fun
Hard by Saint Laurence, hail fellow, well met,--
.....
Ere I rise up tomorrow and go work
On Jerome knocking at his poor old breast
.....
Old Aunt Lapaccia trussed me with one hand
(Its fellow was a stinger as I knew)
.....
So, boy, you're minded," quoth the good fat father,
Wiping his own mouth--'twas refection time--
To quit this miserable world?[198]

52. song. The song that follows is a stornello, a kind of short folksong of the Italians, usually improvised on the name of a flower or some other familiar object.[199]

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[195]Ibid., p. 688.

[196]Hibbard, p. 802.

[197]Woods, II., p. 689.

[198]"Fra Lippo Lippi," l. 55-57, 66-67, 72-73, 88-89.

[199]Woods, II., p. 689.

52. song. The flower songs in the poem are after the manner of the stornelli sung by the Tuscan peasants.[200]

67. Saint Laurence. The church of San Lorenzo.[201]

67. Saint Laurence. near the Church of San Lorenzo.[202]

73. Jerome...breast. Saint Jerome (340?-420) was the most learned of the early Fathers of the Latin Church. He lived in the desert for several years as a penance for his youthful sins. Early Christian art depicted him on his knees before a crucifix, beating his breast with a stone.[203]

73. Jerome, the great Church Father, St. Jerome (c 340-420), who lived as a hermit to atone for his fleshly sins.[204]

88. Aunt Lapaccia. Mona Lapaccia, his father's sister.[205]

88. trussed me, held firmly.[206]

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[200] Robbins, p. 1249.

[201] Ibid., p. 1249.

[202] Whiting, II., p. 563.

[203] Woods, II., p. 689.

[204] Osgood, p. 1130.

[205] Woods, II., p. 689.

[206] Weatherly, II., p. 85.

88. trussed me, lifted me up.[207]

94. refection time, lunch time.[208]

But, mind you, when a boy starves in the streets
Eight years together, as my fortune was,
Watching folk's faces to know who will fling
The bit of half-stripped grape-bunch he desires,
And who will curse or kick him for his pains,--
Which gentleman processional and fine,
Holding a candle to the Sacrament,
Will wink and let him lift a plate and catch
The droppings of the wax to sell again,
Or holla for the Eight and have him whipped,--
.....
I had a store of such remarks, be sure,
Which, after I found leisure, turned to use.
I drew men's faces on my copy-books,
Scrawled them within the antiphonary's marge,
Joined legs and arms to the long music-notes,
.....[209]

117. gentleman processional, etc., gentlemen wearing fine robes and walking in the religious procession.[210]

117. gentleman processional. a gentleman finely attired in churchly garb to march in a religious procession.[211]

120. wax. of candles burned in churches.[212]

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[207]Woods, II., p. 689.

[208]Ibid., p. 689.

[209]"Fra Lippo Lippi," l. 112-121, 127-131.

[210]Woods, II., p. 690.

[211]Whiting, II., p. 563.

[212]Ibid., p. 563.

121. the Eight. the magistrates.[213]

121. the Eight. magistrates of Florence.[214]

127. remarks. things noticed.[215]

130. antiphonary's marge. the Roman service-book.[216]

130. antiphonary's marge. the book of service for the Church. It contains the responses sung by the choir.[217]

131. long music-notes. The medieval music notes were squre or oblong with long stems.[218]

We Carmelites, like those Camaldolese
And Preaching Friars, to do our church up fine
And put the front on it that ought to be!"
.....
I drew them, fat and lean: then, folk at church,
From good old gossips waiting to confess
Their cribs of barrel-droppings, candle-ends,--
To the breathless fellow at the altar-foot,
Fresh from his murder, safe and sitting there
With the little children round him in a row
Of admiration, half for his beard and half

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[213]Russell, p. 948.

[214]Osgood, p. 1130.

[215]Whiting, II., p. 563.

[216]Shafer, II., p. 679.

[217]Hibbard, p. 803.

[218]Woods, II., p. 690.

For that white anger of his victim's son
Shaking a fist at him with one fierce arm,
Signing himself with the other because of Christ
(Whose sad face on the cross sees only this
After the passion of a thousand years)[219]

139-140. Carmelites. an order of friars which derives its name from Mt. Carmel. Camaldolese, of the convent of Camaldoli, near Florence.[220]

139-140. Carmelites. etc. The Carmelites were monks of the Order of Mount Carmel, in Syria; the Camaldolese belonged to the convent of Camaldoli, near Florence; the Preaching Friars are the Dominicans, named after St. Dominic; they were called Brothers Preachers by Pope Innocent III in 1215. These orders owned various monasteries and churches and were eager to possess the greatest religious paintings.[221]

141. the front. The facade of the Church of the Medici in Florence (San Lorenzo), designed by Michaelangelo, has never been finished but presents ragged brickwork, waiting for its marble veneer.[222]

148. cribs. petty thefts.[223]

148. cribs. small thefts of wine, wax, etc.[224]

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[219]"Fra Lippo Lippi", l. 139-141, 146-157.

[220]Whiting, II., p. 563.

[221]Woods, II., p. 690.

[222]Ibid., p. 690.

[223]Shafer, II., p. 679.

[224]Woods, II., p. 690.

150. safe. because the civil law could not seize him in a sacred place.[225]

150. safe. because he is in a sacred place, which by the law of the medieval church protected him from arrest.[226]

154. Shaking.....Christ. Revenge and religion are at war in him.[227]

157. passion, suffering.[228]

That woman's like the Prior's niece, who comes
To care about his asthma: it's the life!"
But there my triumph's straw-fire flared and
funked;
Their betters took their turn to see and say:
.....
Here's Giotto, with his Saint a-praising God,
That sets us praising,--why not stop with him?
.....
Oh, that white smallish female with the breasts,
She's just my niece.....Herodias, I would say,--
Who went and danced and got men's heads cut off![229]

172. funked. smoked.[230]

189. Giotto. (1267?-1337) famous Florentine artist and architect.[231]

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[225]Whiting, II., p. 564.

[226]Woods, II., p. 690.

[227]Ibid., p. 690.

[228]Ibid., p. 690.

[229]"Fra Lippo Lippi," l. 170-173, 189-190, 195-198.

[230]Woods, II., p. 690.

[231]Grebanier, II., p. 576.

189. Giotto. Giotto di Bondone (1276?-1337), one of the outstanding Florentine artists of the Middle Ages, a painter, architect, and sculptor.[232]

189. Giotto. Giotto di Bondone (1267?-1337) a famous Florentine painter, architect, and sculptor. He expressed the soul in his paintings and cared nothing for realistic art. Lippo and Guidi (l. 276) introduced realism, which Lippo here defends.[233]

189. Giotto. the great painter (1276-1337). His method conformed to the notions of propriety entertained by Fra Lippo Lippi's critics.[234]

196. Herodias. See Matthew xiv, 3-12.[235]

196. Herodias.....cut off. It was Salome, the daughter of Herodias, who danced. See note on l. 34.[236]

Lord, it's fast holding by the rings in front--
Those great rings serve more purposes than just
To plant a flag or tie up a horse!
.....
Brother Angelico's the man, you'll find.[237]

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[232]Weatherly, II., p. 376.

[233]Woods, II., p. 691.

[234]Whiting, II., p. 564.

[235]Hibbard, II., p. 803.

[236]Whiting, II., p. 564.

[237]"Fra Lippo Lippi," l. 228-230, 235.

228. The rings in front. large iron rings on the front of the palace. Lippo used them in climbing in and out of his window.[238]

229. more purposes. climbing, in the speaker's case.[239]

235. Brother Angelico. (1387-1455) was a religious painter, painting the soul and not minding the legs and arms. He is said to have fasted and prayed before painting, and to have painted some of his pictures while kneeling.[240]

235. Brother Angelico. Fra Angelico, Giovani da Fiesole (1387-1455), the greatest of the medieval school of religous artists who "painted souls."[241]

Brother Lorenzo stands his single peer--
.....
His name is Guidi--he'll not mind the monks--
.....Have you noticed, now,
Your cullion's hanging face?.....[242]

236. Brother Lorenzo. Lorenzo Monaco, a painter of the Order of the Camaldolese, who also painted "souls."[243]

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[238]Woods, II., p. 691.

[239]Whiting, II., p. 565.

[240]Shafer, II., p. 680.

[241]Woods, II., p. 691.

[242]"Fra Lippo Lippi," l. 236, 276, 306-07.

[243]Woods, II., pl 691.

236. Brother Lorenzo. monk and painter.[244]

276. Guidi, Masaccio (1401-1428). actually Fra Lippo Lippi's predecessor, not his successor.[245]

276. Guidi. Tommaso Guidi, or Masaccio (4101-1428), nicknamed Hulking Tom. He is said to have been the first Italian artist to paint a nude figure. He was Lippo's master, not his disciple.[246]

307. cullion. a low fellow.[247]

307. cullion. a crude fellow.[248]

I painted a Saint Laurence six months since
At Prato, splashed the fresco in fine style;
.....
Who turn the Deacon off his toasted side,
Tasting the air this spicy night which turns
The unaccustomed head like Chianti wine!
.....
There's for you!.....[249]

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[244]Grebanier, II., p. 576.

[245]Whiting, II., p. 565.

[246]Woods, II., p. 692.

[247]Ibid., p. 692.

[248]Robbins, p. 804.

[249]"Fra Lippo Lippi," l. 323-324, 238, 339-340, 345.

323-324. Saint Laurence....fine style. St. Lawrence was martyred in 258 A.D. by being roasted on a gridiron. At one point he asked his tormentors to turn him over; he was "done on one side."[250]

324. At Prado. Some of Lippi's most important work is in the Cathedral at Prado, a town near Florence.[251]

328. Deacon. Saint Laurence.[252]

339. Chianti wine. wine from Chianti, a region south of Florence.[253]

345. There's for you! He gives him money.[254]

.....Give me six months, then go, see Something in Sant' Ambrogio's! Bless the nuns! They want a cast of my office. I shall paint God in the midst, Madonna and her babe,[255]

346. Sant' Ambrogio's. a Florentine convent.[256]

346. Sant' Ambrogio's. Saint Ambrose's Church in Florence. St. Ambrose was a famous Church

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[250]Whiting, II., p. 565.

[251]Woods, II., p. 693.

[252]Weatherly, II., p. 378.

[253]Woods, II., p. 693.

[254]Whiting, II., p. 566.

[255]"Fra Lippo Lippi," l. 345-48.

[256]Lieder, II., p. 595.

leader during the fourth century. He became Bishop of Milan in 374.[257]

347. a cast o' my office. A work of my doing.[258]

347. I shall paint. This refers to a picture painted for Saint Ambrose's Church in Florence, "The Coronation of the Virgin.[259]

347. I shall paint. The picture described is "The Coronation of the Virgin," now in the Academy of Fine Arts, Florence. The model for the Virgin was Lucrezia Buti, Lippo's mistress.[260]

And then i' the front, of course a saint or two--
Saint John, because he saves the Florentines,
Saint Ambrose, who puts down in black and white
The convent's friends and gives them a long day,
And Job, I must have him there past mistake,
The man of Uz (and Us without the z,)[261]

354. Saint John....Florentines. St. John the Baptist is the patron saint of Florence.[262]

355-356. Saint Ambrose...long day. St. Ambrose is to be shown writing down the names of those who have made gifts to the convent. As long as the names can be read, the fame of the donors will endure.[263]

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[257]Wood, II., p. 693.

[258]Weatherly, II., p. 378.

[259]Grebanier, II., p. 577.

[260]Woods, II., p. 693.

[261]"Fra Lippo Lippi," l. 353-358.

[262]Whiting, II., p. 566.

[263]Ibid., p. 566.

357. Job. the hero of the Old Testament book which bears his name, popularly regarded as a type of patience.[264]

358. Uz. There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job."--Job i, I.[265]

Out of a corner when you least expect,
As one by a dark stair into a great light,
Music and talking, who but Lippo! I!--
.....
.....Could Saint John there draw--
His camel-hair make up a painting-brush?
We come to brother Lippo for all that,
Iste perfecit opus!.....[266]

361. Out of a corner...I. Lippo's head appears in the lower right-hand corner of the picture.[267]

361. Out of a corner...I. Lippi painted his own head in a corner of the picture, "The Coronation of the Virgin."[268]

375. camel-hair. the raiment of John the Baptist, according to Mark 1:6.[269]

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[264] Ibid., p. 566.

[265] Hibbard, p. 905.

[266] "Fra Lippo Lippi," l. 361-63, 374-77.

[267] Woods, II., p. 693.

[268] Osgood, p. 1134.

[269] Whiting, II., p. 566.

375. camel-hair. Cf. Mark 1:6; "And John was clothed with camel's hair."[270]

377. Iste...This one did the work.[271]

377. Iste. "this man executed the work." A scroll attached to the artist's portrait in the painting carries this legend.[272]

I shuffle sideways with my blushing face
Under the cover of a hundred wings
Thrown like a spread of kirtles when you're gay
And play hot cockles, all the doors being shut,
Till, wholly unexpected, in there pops
The hotheaded husband!.....[273]

380. kirtles. tunics, coats.[274]

380. kirtles. short skirts.[275]

381. hot cockles. an old English game in which a blindfolded player tries to guess who strikes him.[276]

381. hot cockles. The blindfolded player in the old English game of cockles must guess

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[270] Woods, II., p. 693.

[271] Russell, p. 951.

[272] Whiting, II., p. 566.

[273] "Fra Lippo Lippi," l. 378-383.

[274] Woods, II., p. 693.

[275] Whiting, II., p. 566.

[276] Woods, II., p. 693.

> who strikes him. But the reference to "The hotheaded husband" in l. 383 shows that the monk is thinking also of a less innocent game![277]

* * *

Two poems which appear nine times each in the various anthologies are "The Lost Leader" and "The Grammarian's Funeral." We shall complete our study of annotations by a survey of "The Lost Leader."

One of the shorter headnotes is this:

> Browning stated that the idea of this poem was suggested by Wordsworth's change of politics from Liberalism to Conservatism, but he emphatically denied that any detailed identification was intended.[278]

> Browning admitted that he had Wordsworth in mind as the subject of this poem, but that it was not intended to be "the very effigies" of the poet.[279]

> The suggestion for this early poem was undoubtedly Wordsworth's abandonment of the Liberal principles of his youth for the reactionary Conservatism of his old age; but is was only a suggestinn. 'Once call

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[277] Whiting, II., p. 566.

[278] Woods, II., p. 666.

[279] Robbins, p. 1244.

> my fancy portrait Wordsworth,' Browning wrote, 'and how much more ought one to say.' In another letter he speaks of Wordsworth's 'moral and intellectual superiority,' and protests against taking this poem as an attempt to draw his real likeness. It is really a character study from Browning's own imagination.[280]

One of Browning's replies to repeated questionings about this poem is a letter of 1875 addressed to A. B. Grosart:

> Dear Mr. Grosart,--I have been asked the question you now address me with, and as duly answered it, I can't remember how many times; there is no sort of objection to one more assurace or rather confession, on my part, that I did in my hasty youth presume to use the great and venerated personality of Wordsworth as a sort of painter's model; one from which this or the other particular feature may be selected and turned to account; had I intended more, above all, such a boldness as portraying the entire man, I should not have talked about 'handfuls of silver and bits of ribbon.' These never influenced the change of politics in the great poet, whose defection, nevertheless, accompanied as it was by a regular face-about of his special party, was to my juvenile apprehension, and even mature consideration, an event to deplore. But just as in the tapestry on the wall I can recognize figures which have struck out a fancy, on occasion, that though truly enough thus derived, yet would be preposterous as a copy, so, though I dare not deny the original of

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[280] Cunliffe, p. 857.

> my little poem, I altogether refuse to have it considered as the 'very effigies' of such a moral and intellectual superiority.
>
> 'Faithfully yours,'
>
> 'Robert Browning,'[281]

Grebanier gives the same letter as his head-note, but he adds the heading of the letter, "19 Warwick-Crescent, W., Feb. 24, '75."[282]

Shafer quotes the same letter as his head-note, except that he adds another paragraph:

> In 1845, however, Browning's "handful of silver" and "riband" could only be interpreted as references to Wordsworth's recent acceptance of a pension and the laureateship.[283]

In the nine anthologies which printed the poem only two gave footnotes; one gave two, and one gave one.

> Best fight on well, for we taught him--
> strike gallantly,
> Menace our heart ere we master his own;[284]

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[281] Osgood, p. 117.

[282] Grebanier, II., p. 563.

[283] Shafer, II., p. 672.

[284] "The Lost Leader," l. 29-30.

29. Best fight. it were best for him to fight.[285]

30. master his own. almost defeat us before we conquer him.[286]

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[285]Woods, II., p. 666.

[286]Lieder, II., p. 568.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Conclusions upon the treatment of Browning by the anthologists must begin with the fact that he is of sufficient literary importance to be represented in all thirteen texts, including those concerned with the broader field of world literature. In his Chapter "Words and Music," Osgood places Browning among the literary giants of the world.

> But truth is neither new nor old; it is dateless, as dateless as the fact that two and two make four. It may only be newly discovered. As science is looking for the dateless truth about the physical world, so literature for a much longer time has been concerned with the dateless truth, not only about the physical world, but about human life, moral and spiritual, and its mysteries. And the really great ones--poets, playwrights, novelists--are they who have seen life as a dateless thing, so intensely that it has burned its impression into their souls and works with a heat that never cools. No modern cleverness or technique or "best-sellership" can make up for the enduring life of these poets. Through the work of Chaucer, Spenser, Milton, Shakespeare, Browning, we may, if we take a good look, behold the world as it has been, is now, and so far as we or they can see, ever shall be, whatever its outward alteration.[1]

Second, it is necessary to notice that these thirteen

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[1] Osgood, p. 4.

anthologists have the very human quality of seeing things differently. They differ in their evaluation and placement of Browning, they differ in the treatment of his biography, they differ in the number and kind of selections of his poetry reproduced, they differ as to the number and kind of annotations.

In twelve of the books selections are arranged in a chronological order. The thirteenth, Addison Hibbard's Writers of the Western World, arranges its content into mood-aspect classification and places Browning in the Romantic mood. Of the twelve chronological books, two place the author in no category, one places him in the realistic movement, and six place him under the Victorian Era. Cross places Browning as a British and Continental Poet (1850-1925). Lieder places him as a later nineteenth century poet; Woods places him in the section on Democracy, Science, and Industrialism, under the topic of Poets of Faith and Doubt.

In evaluating his work the anthologists differ. In reading Shafer one gets the impression that Browning is a left-over from the Victorian Period. Robbins, however, praises him thus:

> It is not easy to evaluate a poet like Browning, because he is so different from the conventional run of poets. A trenchant and vigorous thinker, with little care for considerations of form, he had an abiding interest in human beings. Through the medium of the dramatic monologue he deftly and surely

> analyzes the reactions of a human soul in a moment of crisis. Although not the first to employ the maximum of effectiveness, Browning psychologizes and philosophizes through the medium of verse, making his people illustrate his favorite ideas, the leading one of which is "success in failure," best expressed in the famous line "a man's reach should exceed his grasp." In an age of doubt Browning was a radiant optimist who through the tonic quality of his dynamic verse is sure to have a permanent audience.[2]

In considering the biographical material given by the various anthologists, Browning is given all of thirty-three ill-chosen words by Thompson in Our Heritage of World Literature,[3] in contrast to about five thousand words by Osgood and Herrick in Eleven British Writers, by far the best of the biographies.

A "ship's log" method of biography presentation was used by Russell, Wells, and Stauffer in Literature in English. A student would profit very little from such a chronological table.

> Robert Browning, English Poet
> (1812-1889)
>
> Irregular schooling.

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[2] Robbins, p. 1238.

[3] Thompson, p. 1149. Robert Browning (1812-1889) was the son of a London banker. He married Elizabeth Barrett in 1846, after which he lived some years in Italy. His poetic career extends over nearly sixty years.

1833 "Pauline."
1833-34 Visits to Russia and Italy.
1835 "Paracelsus."
1837 "Strafford" (poetic drama, produced at Convent Garden).
1840 "Sordello."
1842 "Bells and Pomegranates, III - Dramatic Lyrics."
1845 "Bells and Pomegranates, VII - Dramatic Romances and Lyrics."
1846 Marriage to Elizabeth Barrett; residence in Italy.
1855 "Men and Women."
1864 "Dramatis Personae."
1868-69 "The Ring and the Book." [4]

What selections have the anthologists chosen in their books as representative of Browning's work? In number as few as four used by Cross and as many as fifty-eight used by Osgood represent the poet.

For the most part these selections are the shorter lyrics and the well-known dramatic monologues. These are the most easily understood of Browning's work--and the most popular:

> It is probably by his shorter rather than by his longer poems that Browning will hold his place among the English poets. Fortunately for the ordinary reader, his best poems are not his most difficult ones, and the patient student will find that even his worst are marked by extraordinary intellectual vigor and insight into character. While his reputation has hardly kept the supreme place given to it

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[4] Russell, p. 941.

> by his admirers at the close of the Victorian era, he remains one of the greatest figures in English poetry, remarkable alike for his message to his time and for the skill and power with which he delivered it.[5]

Regarding the subject of annotations the anthologists have on the whole failed to provide for the needs of the student. An example of this failure is Russell, who gives no explanation whatever as to who Fra Lippo was. Too often annotations in one anthology are exactly like those in another. At times the annotations are exactly opposite; kirtles was cited by one book as tunics, coats; in another, as short skirts.

Another fault in the annotations of various types is incompleteness. While one author refers to a Biblical passage by giving only the chapter and verse number, another anthologist will not only give this reference, but will explain the content of the reference. Ordinarily the student does not have a Bible by his side as he would a dictionary to refer to in reading a poem. The same fault of incompleteness is found in identifications of people spoken of, such as Brother Lorenzo who is identified as a "monk and painter" by Grebanier and as "Lorenzo Monaco, a painter of the Order of the Camaldolese, who also painted 'souls,'" by Whiting.

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[5] Cunliffe, p. 851.

Two anthologies which provide the needed footnotes are The College Survey of English Literature, II., and The Literature of England, II. There is a difference, however, in the quality of the notes provided. Whiting predigests the poem for the student, giving not only the needed facts, but coloring the thought and the idea of the poem with his own prejudices.

Yet with all their limitations, vagaries, omissions, errors, blind spots, and prejudices, it is these anthologies which introduce literature to the literate and semi-literate college student. While they seldom give ultimate answers, they often raise lively questions; and while they are often feeble in suggesting the ultimate judgments, they do encourage understanding and admiration. As for Browning, the reward of this study was a feeling first expressed by Landor:

> Since Chaucer was alive and hale
> No man has walked along our road with step
> So active, so inquiring eye, or tongue
> So varied in discourse.[6]

This thesis was typed by Laura M. Mackey.

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[6] "Robert Browning," l. 7-10.

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